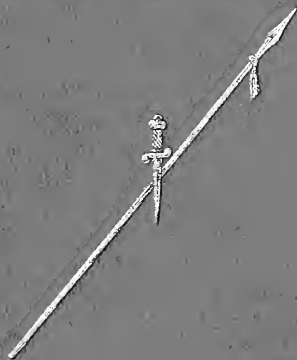


HERMANN AGHA

AN EASTERN NARRATIVE



W. GIFFORD · PALGRAVE ·

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To the Hon. Secy of the
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I have the honor to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter of the
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I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours,
J. M. Smith

HERMANN AGHA:

AN EASTERN NARRATIVE.

BY
W. GIFFORD PALGRAVE,

AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN CENTRAL ARABIA,"
ETC.

"I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it ;
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes,—
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery ; of my redemption thence
And portance in my travels' history."
—*Shakespeare.*

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1872.

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PREFACE.

English

TALES called "Eastern," are very generally characterised by an extravagance in plot and in detail, an exaggeration in sentiment and in expression, which bear a hardly nearer resemblance to the realities of Eastern life, than the "Cato" of Addison or the "Count Robert" of Scott do to the times and persons they profess to represent. Even the current versions—not Lane's—or rather paraphrases, of the "Arabian Nights," belong in great measure to this class; while Hope's inimitable "Anastasius," so perfect in its Levantine delineations, becomes unreal when venturing into the regions of unalloyed Oriental existence.

This is a thing to be regretted; for false notions, though on subjects of comparatively remote interest, never fail to be ultimately, in

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English of Bernbaum 18325 Pickering

some way or other, injurious; and whatever is worth knowing at all, is worth knowing rightly.

In the following narrative, I have accordingly endeavoured to lay open before Western eyes a page, one page only, from the great volume of Eastern life. Its characters are all the better legible through the light thrown by the reflex or subjective European intellect on the more spontaneous and objective ways and habits of Asia, especially when the two natures are brought, as they are in this narrative, into intimate contact. The result of such contact is often a strange one; it was so in the present instance; so strange, indeed, that some apology might seem requisite for its publication.

Be its apology then, that it is not fiction, but reality; not invention, but narration. Hence also, like whatever is true, it has its moral, or indeed its many morals; they may be found by those who seek them, in the incidents them-

selves, of the manifold loom of life that weaves the chequer-work of colour and race in the lands where, as some think, all races and all colours had origin.

The narrator, and at the same time the principal character, of this story is Hermann Wolff, a Saxon, native of the village of Rosenau, near Törzberg, on the south-eastern frontier of Transylvania. Hermann had, while yet a boy, in the year 1762, been carried off into slavery by a band of Turkish marauders. But at the time here chronicled, that is, in the month of June nine years later, he was already an officer of high trust in the service of the famous 'Alee Beg Baloot-Kapan, the Georgian, then for a short space independent ruler of Egypt; and as such, he held rank in the conquering fleet that sailed from Egypt to Syria in 1771. It is well known how 'Alee Beg threw off, in 1768, the allegiance of the Porte; and, in the

fourth year of his rebellion, commissioned his lieutenant Moḥammed-Beg Aboo-Dahab to invade and subdue Syria, with an army that anticipated the exploits of Ibraheem Pasha and his soldiers in the nineteenth century; meeting with like success at first, followed by similar but even more crushing ruin, both to the troops and to him who sent them, at the close. However, in 1771, 'Alee Beg was at the height of his good-fortune; and his young favourite and brother-in-law Hermann, then known as Aḥmed Beg en-Nimsawee, or the German, might well be proud of the flag under which he sailed. And then it was, on board of an Egyptian vessel, that he related what follows to his intimate friend and associate the Arab Ṭanṭawee Beg, so called after his native village of Ṭanṭah, in Lower Egypt, one of the chief leaders in the Syrian expedition, the right arm of 'Alee Beg in life, and the faithful companion of his downfall and death, in 1773, in the forty-

fifth year of his age. I should here add, that Hermann's younger sister Mary, entitled by Egyptian chroniclers "the beautiful," had been, like her brother, kidnapped from Rosenau while yet a child; and, after many vicissitudes, was at this epoch the favourite wife of 'Alee Beg himself, and mother of his only daughter, the dearly beloved Khadeejah.

It was in the Mosque called after Moḥammed Abou-Dahab, the lieutenant, murderer, and successor of 'Alee Beg, in the north-east quarter of Cairo, that, under the guidance of a learned Sheykh of the town, I found and studied the manuscript records of the great Egyptian revolt, and of those concerned in it. And thence I extracted the main facts, among which the present tale forms an episode. The rest was drawn by me from other sources, for the authenticity of which I can vouch, but need not here specify more particularly.

The attempt to transfer an Eastern picture

to a Western canvas, has necessitated the adoption of a certain liberty of phrase and expression, unusual perhaps, among Orientalists; but due to the impossibility of giving to a literal translation of Arab word and thought, the vividness required for the reproduction of the imaged sense in European minds. By so doing, I have in a measure sacrificed philology to truth; perhaps, an advantageous sacrifice. Nor does this in reality detract from the exactness of the rendering. Youth, energy, and love, have a language of their own more ancient than Babel; a tongue still common and unconfused by tribe or clime.

HERMANN AGHA.



PART I.

Late or early, dusk or clear,
Spring-tide comes but once a year ;
Joy or sorrow, lost or won,
Heart's first love is once alone.

Summer seasons may be fair,
But sweet spring-tide is not there.
Later loves right dear may prove,
Yet they liken not first love.

“AND now,” said Tanṭawee Beg to his friend, as they sat together near the stern bulwarks of the ship, somewhat apart from the others on board, “let me hear what next happened to you after your capture.”

Hermann complied, and thus continued his story.

“After about a fortnight of stupefaction, rather than of positive suffering, passed in

the village,—I forget its name,—where the marauders stopped to take stock of, and to portion out their booty, my wounds, which were not dangerous, had healed sufficiently to permit of my accompanying my captors on their seemingly interminable round of march and halt, across what I afterwards learned to be the province of Roumelia. Afterwards, I say; for at the time itself I paid little attention either to the country we traversed, or to any other circumstance of the journey, except my own miserable condition my ruined past, my unhappy present, and my worse than uncertain future. At last, when God willed, we reached Constantinople.

“As we approached it, the actual view of that vast capital, known to me in my native town only by vague and fabulous description, its far-reaching crown of walls and towers, its domes and minarets, its cypress groves

and gilded pinnacles, aroused me for the first time from the half-lethargy in which I was plunged. I gazed with a sense of admiration and curiosity, not unmixed even then with a sort of boyish eagerness to be there, and to take my part in that unknown world; till I felt almost a desire to begin my new life, whatever that might be, in good earnest, though I could not so soon forget all that I had left behind me in the old.

“But my spirits sank again when once within the town, where I could then see absolutely nothing beyond the narrow and uneven streets which we slowly threaded, till, after many windings and turnings, we stopped before a low stone portal, crossed by an iron chain. Here our band alighted; and I soon found myself within, lodged, or, to use a more fitting term, stabled, in company with a score of fellow-captives, mostly Geor-

gians and Circassians, in the vault of a large and gloomy khan,¹ situated, as I subsequently discovered, in the very heart of the city. Three days after, days of discomfort and degradation that I gladly pass over in memory as in recital, I was a purchased slave.

“The master whom my fate assigned me was a wealthy Beg, of an old Koordish family, resident for some generations past in the city of Bagdad. There he had been born and brought up ; and now, after a long course of intriguing to be appointed Pasha over his natal town and district, had at length attained the scope of his persevering ambition. This he had effected by presenting himself in person at Constantinople, along with such good store of costly shawls and carpets, of coin and

¹ A large, unfurnished building, generally quadrangular in form, and containing vaults and rooms for the accommodation of goods or travellers.

jewellery, of Persian tumbakee,¹ and Khor-assan sabres, that he had effectually convinced all the Stamboul officials who were anywise, directly or indirectly, concerned in the nomination to that important post, from the Sadr-ul-'Aazem, or Grand Vizier, downwards, that he, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo Beg,² was, alone of all candidates present or possible, rightly qualified to fill it.

“Business however, even when conducted by those best of agents, gifts, is slow work at Constantinople; and Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo had already, I was told, passed six entire months of attendance and present-making at the capital; and he was now, not unnaturally, anxious to bring so expensive a stay to an end. However, before

¹ A kind of tobacco, used for the water-pipe, or hooka; the best is grown at Shiraz.

² The son of black Mustapha.

quitting the scene of his hard-earned diplomatic, or rather financial, triumph, the new-made Pasha had prudently determined to surround his person with a select number of attendants, strangers to the jealousies and plots of Irak¹ and Bagdad. But at the same time, and for analogous reasons, he was unwilling to take with him, as the future inmates of his palace, any who had been themselves long enough at Constantinople to form over close and, possibly, dangerous connections there; lest by so doing he should, instead of a body-servant, get hold of a spy, perhaps an assassin. Hence his choice fell by preference on new arrivals from distant lands, such as myself.

¹ 'Irak' is the extreme south-east province of the Turkish Empire, comprising the lower course of the Tigris and Euphrates down to the Persian Gulf; its inhabitants have been at all times ill-famed for fickleness and treachery.

“Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, when I was first brought before him, was sitting in an apartment of the Yenee-Khan,¹ near the mosque called that of Bayazeed, after its founder, the sultan second of that name. My conductors had provided me for the occasion with decent though coarse clothing, of Turkish fashion, and had besides given me the benefit of a bath, which, while it improved my general appearance, refreshed and made me feel after a manner disposed to meet my new lot with equanimity, if not with cheerfulness.

“We entered. The Pasha was installed on a divan which his attendants had extemporized for him out of mattresses and carpets ; some of these he had brought with him all the weary way from Bagdad,

¹ “New Khan;” a portion of it still remains.

as might be reasonably conjectured from the travel-stains; others were fresh, and apparently of recent purchase. All around in the large square room was a confusion of brass ewers and basins, of pipes, and drinking cups, of coffee services and cooking utensils, of saddlery and saddle-bags, of arms various in size, form, and use; guns, swords, daggers, pistols, some brass, some iron or steel, some short, some long, plain and inlaid, old and new. Bales of cloth were piled up in one corner; saddlery, thickly studded, one set with brass, another with silver; housings of rich but faded velvets, red and blue, broadly worked with tarnished gold; and horse-cloths of which the colour and material were scarcely distinguishable, through the wear and tear of road and weather, lay chaotically heaped together in another; while half a dozen

lances, four tufted and two tasselled, stood propped up in a third; all bespoke journey done and yet to do.

“As disordered a medley were the persons to whom these articles belonged. A dozen of the Pasha’s retinue, wild, olive-complexioned fellows in long Arab dresses, where all the colours of the rainbow were dashed with all the colours of the soil, sat or lounged in the courtyard below; while on the landing-place at the head of the stairs several better-class attendants, attired in the clothes of rough silk proper to the townsmen of the South, and seemingly from Bagdad itself or its immediate neighbourhood, stood chatting together in groups; their fair complexions contrasting strongly with the brown or black of about an equal number of Abyssinians and negroes; one of these last, a stout African fully armed, guarded the chamber door. As for the newly-

made Pasha himself, a handsome black-eyed, black-browed, hook-nosed man, every inch a Koorde, with a thick black beard slightly sprinkled with gray, but no other mark of advancing age on his dusky face, he was diligently smoking a nargheelah,¹ a very grand one, fantastically enamelled about its silver stem, and shaped into a lily-flower, also of silver ; while at the same time he was attentively looking over scraps and jottings of accounts with his *kaḥiya*.² This latter was a Christian, native of a hamlet near Bagdad, plainly dressed in dark colours.

“When I had been introduced into the room, the Pasha, raising his head, reconnoitred me from top to toe, and in every possible light and angle. When however my conductors

¹ A water-pipe, of metal or glass ; the smoke is inhaled through a long flexible tube.

² Head-writer, or clerk.

proposed, by way of a certificate, some still closer and minuter inspections,—so at least I conjectured from their manner, but, as the conversation was held mostly in Arabic, a language with which I was yet unacquainted, I could only guess,—the Pasha, much to my satisfaction, checked them ; having already, as it appeared, sufficiently made up his mind.

“After some remarks addressed, but still in Arabic, to his Bagdadee followers, whose curiosity had led them, unbidden into the apartment, an intrusion which, however, their master did not in the least appear to resent, he put to me a few questions in Turkish, with the colloquial forms of which I was, thanks to previous intercourse with the peasants from the other side of our own frontier, and the not unfrequent arrivals of muleteers and salesmen through the pass of Törzberg, and in the village of Rosenau itself,

—already fairly well acquainted. How old was I? Of what nationality? How had I been made a prisoner? Was I a good rider? A practised shot? and the like. My answers must, on the whole, have been satisfactory; for, after some chaffering, chiefly conducted by the *kaḥiya*, who no doubt secured for himself a very respectable profit on the bargain, five full purses¹ of silver, a considerable sum, were paid for me that very day; and I was enrolled among the slaves in the Pasha's suite.

The household was a transitional one, and no very special duty in it was at first assigned me; occasionally I filled and presented a pipe, or served guests with lemonade and coffee, or scoured arms and harness.

¹ A "purse" is five hundred piastres, the piastre was equivalent to about eighteen-pence, English; it has now sunk to twopence; the sum here indicated must have been about £186.

This done, I was free to lounge away three-fourths of my time in a fine suit of clothes, with which I was from the first becomingly rigged-out by my master's liberality. And really I felt almost,—not to say quite,—vain of the unlimited silk sash, the silver-embroidered şelahlik,¹ the long blue silk tassel to my cap, and the shiny red boots, but these last I always took off when I came into the Pasha's presence; not to mention the loose trousers and open jacket of stout dark-green cloth, the wearing of which first taught me by experience how much more comfortable and serviceable Asiatic garments are, in most respects, than European.

“About this same time Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo made some further purchases of live and intelligent stock, in addition to the dozen

¹ Arms-belt.

Circassians, Abyssinians, and negroes, with whom he had already provided himself while here. These new acquisitions were two Greek lads, natives of some island or other in the Archipelago, and a Croatian; the former sly supple fellows, up to any cleverness or villainy; the latter a rough raw-boned creature, but true as steel, and good at all kinds of work.

“We remained yet a month longer at Constantinople, during a week of which I was laid up by the ceremonies,—or rather the ceremony, for there is, you know, only one in fact, but it is a serious affair, performed to make me a chartered Mussulman. This inconvenience over, I enjoyed myself considerably; visiting, along with my fellows, the world, then new to me, of countless *kahwahs*,¹ baths, and

¹ Places where coffee, and often strong drink is sold; they are the common resort of Eastern idleness and gossip, occasionally vice.

other places of town-amusement, gazing round me in the solemn gloom of Agia Sophia,¹ or the dazzling splendour of the Soleymaneeyah,² that unrivalled dome of brilliancy."

"I should like to see it, and hope to do so one day, uninvited," here interrupted Tanṭawee Beg, "though, from what I hear, Agia Sophia must bear a nearer resemblance to our own Egyptian style."

"Please God you shall, and I be with you," replied Hermann, then continued ;—"sauntering amid the cypresses and sycamores of Eyoob,³ or threading in a caique,—novel pleasure,—the emerald windings of the

¹ Justinian's cathedral, now the mosque of that name.

² The great mosque built by Soleyman the Magnificent, and the finest specimen of Turkish architecture in the world ; it is also called "Kubbet-en-Noor," or "the cupola of light."

³ A well-known mosque and cemetery of that name on the Golden Horn.

Bosphorus; sometimes also riding, slowly and deferentially, with my master on his visits of ceremony or friendship, now within the limits of the city, now without.

“On one of these occasions, the Pasha happened to be accompanied by four attendants only, myself, two Bagdadees, and the negro whom I had seen acting doorkeeper on the day of my purchase, a good-natured thickset Darfooree,¹ Sa’eed by name; the place we were bound for was somewhat distant, and the ride long. While on the way, I observed a figure, a familiar one I thought, that slipped quietly, and, as it were, furtively, out of a small side-door in the wall of a large inclosure, where stood, half-visible through the foliage of the trees, now thinned by advancing

¹ *i.e.* Native of Darfoor, a negro kingdom of Central Africa, not far from Kordofan; its inhabitants are distinguished for strength and courage.

autumn, a spacious and handsome house, adorned with quaint arabesques of many colours under its projecting eaves. Looking more attentively I recognized Yoosuf, one of our master's lately adopted Greeks, and pointed him out to my companions. But while I was so doing, the sound either of our voices, or of the approaching tread of our horses, caught his ear; he looked up a moment, then turning sharp off took the direction of a side-alley that soon withdrew him from our sight.

“ ‘What on earth can Yoosuf have to do all alone here in this part of the town?’ said one of the Bagdadees in our party.

“ ‘Some intrigue or other rascality of his own, I suppose; no good for certain; what good ever did a Greek go after?’ answered the other, who was by no means in love with the new arrivals.

“ Almost instinctively I looked back towards

the spot where I had seen him first emerge, and inquired to whom the garden and the house over the wall belonged. Sa'eed the negro looked also, and having recognised it, informed us that it was the house of one Eyas Beg, a wealthy member of the Defterdar¹ Government department ; the Beg was of Armenian origin, though now a professed Muslim. Meanwhile the Pasha, deep in his own thoughts, had ridden on ; and took, or seemed to take, no notice of the occurrence or of our talk ; nor could a mere attendant, like one of ourselves, have ventured unquestioned to broach to him this, or indeed any other subject. As for myself, I hardly gave it a second thought at the time ; but somehow the name of Eyas Beg stuck in my mind ; from its novelty perhaps.

¹ The Financial.

“Some days later it was my duty to form part of my master’s suite, on a visit which he paid to the Nishanjee Pasha ;¹ who, at the Sultan’s behoof, had signed and sealed the freshly issued diploma of government for the province of Bagdad. This dignitary kept state in a handsome open kiosk on the sea-shore, near the harbour point, just beyond the outer wall of the great Serey’.²

“While at my ordinary post of waiting on occasions like these, by the open door of the kiosk, I could see, looking in, many persons of the highest rank and importance assembled there. Of their number was the quondam Armenian, Eyas Beg ; he was pointed out to me by the negro Sa’eed, who happened to be

¹ An official of high and often misplaced trust, who used to affix the facsimile of the imperial signature to documents of importance. The post has since been abolished.

² Palace.

at my side. The expression of the Beg's eye a dull, heavy eye, when he turned it, as he often did, on our master, was remarkable and unpleasing ; and he kept ever and anon whispering, between glances and winks, to his next-hand neighbour. This was a pale thin-faced man, evidently of southern and provincial origin, dressed in the simple white turban usually worn by those of the Molla¹ class ; his eye was, if possible, more sinister yet than that of Eyas Beg himself. This man had the eye of the serpent, the other that of the wolf. I asked Sa'eed what his name might be ; he answered—

“‘I do not know ; but his face shows him to be from Bagdad or thereabouts ; it is an unlucky face ; curse him.’

“‘There is mischief at work somewhere,’

¹ A legist ; often, but erroneously, rendered, a priest.

thought I ; but neither my position nor other circumstances permitted my communicating my suspicions to anybody, leastways to our master.

“ At last all formalities were completed ; and about a week after our visit to the Nishanjee Pasha, we set out on our way for Bagdad. We crossed over to Scutari in boats ; thence, passing through Ismid, Angora, Keer-Shahr, and many other towns, we pursued a long, and at times, a difficult route, till we reached Keysareeyah.¹ Winter had now fairly set in, and the highlands which we traversed were often covered with snow. Indeed at Keysareeyah itself we came to a dead halt ; the mountains between that place and Khar-

¹ The Cæsarea of the Byzantine Empire ; a central town in Asia Minor, and still of importance. The inhabitants have been of all times noted for turbulence and sedition.

poot¹ being, so the country people said, almost impassable.

“In Keysareeyah accordingly, we remained rather more than a month. We were lodged all together in a huge, straggling house, belonging to one of the turbulent city-Aghas, close by the old castle; and had little to do but to warm our hands over pans of charcoal, wander listlessly and well muffled up through the covered labyrinth of the interminable market place, and wish for the return of milder weather.

“The cold tried us all much, though not equally; the Pasha, wrapped in double furs, scarcely stirred from the fireside; the Bagdadees, negroes, and their like, kept the doors closed, huddled together, and whined. One, indeed, of the Bagdadees fell

¹ The next large town easterly, on the Bagdad road.

ill and died. We buried him a bow-shot outside the town walls, in the old Turkoman cemetery, then deep in snow; I pitied him for having to lie in so cold a resting-place. The Dalmatian,—Michael had been his original name, but this had subsequently been changed to Ghalib,—and I, felt the climate least of all; Istrian and Carpathian winters had seasoned our boyhood to that which seemed to most of our comrades an unbearable severity of temperature. This circumstance proved a lucky one for me; as it enabled me to secure to myself, for ever after, the devoted friendship of the negro Sa'eed, by means of an opportune present which I here made him, of my sheepskin overcoat. True, the Pasha had provided each of us with one for the road; but Sa'eed, with the innate recklessness of his kind, had lost or sold,—he said the former, but I believe it was the

latter,—that given to him before he was out of Constantinople ; for me, I could make tolerable shift without one.

“So passed our time, dully enough on the whole, till February brought a somewhat milder air, and we resumed our journey. So far as roads went, this second stage of our journey was, however, the roughest and the worst ; the mountains were high, the paths desperate, and our beasts well nigh worn out with work and scarcity of provender. March was far advanced before we reached Diar-Bekr,¹ its walls stood out particularly black against the mountains of Koordistan beyond, still streaked with snow.

“ More than three months had now elapsed since we left Constantinople, six, since I had

¹ Anciently Amida, a large and busy town on the right bank of the Tigris ; the great valley leading down to the Persian Gulf commences here.

seen my last of Transylvania; and I had by this time really got to like my new life. Not that I had wholly lost the memory of my father and the rest of my family; on the contrary I often thought of them, and of my sister Mary in particular, with regret and anxiety. Still I was young; and all my homeward thoughts did not hinder me from taking very hearty interest and pleasure in the countries we traversed; in the noble scenery, the wooded crags, the rushing torrents, the wide plains, the dense forests, in the quaint quiet villages, the frequent ruins of unknown date, the vegetation and tillage,—such of it, that is, as was apparent even at this season of the year in sheltered spots,—new to my eyes; also in the strange customs and unwonted manners of the men; occasionally too,—but that was a rare good fortune,—in the pretty faces of the peasant girls. Now and then also we

got a chance shot at a hare, a woodcock, or the like ; we quarrelled with some villagers, and were friendly with others. One day, the weather was fine and the sky, in spite of the wintry season, quite startling to me in its clearness, the air pure and brisk ; another day, heavy showers of rain and sleet, with driving wind and mist, would give us something of an adventure in hunting after a shelter ; in a word, I enjoyed the journey much more than, not half a year before, I could have thought possible for me.

“With most of my fellow-travellers, however, matters went otherwise. The Bagdadees, annoyed by the cold, and little used to roughing, were frequently out of humour ; the Circassians took occasion from every accident or inconvenience of the route to quarrel with all around them in general, and with each other in particular ; while the two Greeks

seemed to be always on the look out for something that they could not find.

“Not caring for squabbles and intrigues, I preferred associating with the better-humoured ones of our party; that is, with the semi-Koordish Arab horsemen—men accustomed to adventure and fatigue, wild daring fellows, whose courage seemed to rise with every hardship and difficulty. I derived much amusement, too, from our half-dozen blacks, who, when not in a state of violent but short-lived passion about some very inadequate cause, were normally in excellent spirits, and sociable enough. The Croatian, Ghalib, kept along with us, but was no talker; besides, he knew neither Turkish nor Arabic, and only a few words of German; of this last language he availed himself when hard pressed to communicate with me, and through me with the others. I was, on the contrary, quick at

learning, and had, in addition to my Turkish, already picked up a fair amount of low Arabic, for which I was chiefly indebted to my African companions. With our master, the Pasha, we had little converse; he rode apart, none being habitually near him but his *kaḥiya*, and two other men of similar rank; one of these was a distant relation, and his private secretary.

“We remained twenty days at Diar-Bekr. All had need of repose—Pasha and slaves, attendants and horses. The genial spring warmth, so different from the lifeless heat of autumn, invited us to rest and to repair our strength; and the town, unlike Keysareeyah, abounded in attractions for visitors of whatever sort, besides those more especially prepared for, or reserved to ourselves. It was a pleasant time.

“During our stay here, I more than once

helped to escort my master on his frequent visits to an intimate friend of his, one Rustoom Beg, a Koord of old family, wealthy, and influential. The Beg's house was agreeably situated among the gardens without the town walls, not far from the river; on every side of it rose a perfect forest of fruit-trees of every kind, now in the fullest of their blossom and the greenest of their leaf. When I had once been recognised as a favourite attendant of the great man of the day, the newly-appointed governor of Bagdad, I was admitted as a chartered lounge wherever I chose to go. I took, as it happened, a peculiar fancy to Rustoom Beg's garden, in the quiet seclusion of which I found fitter opportunity than elsewhere for the solitude that, naturally enough, I often desired; and no hindrance was put to my entering it and remaining there at any time or hour of the

day. And thus it came about in this very garden that—but what good would there be in relating it? Lost is lost, to me at least,—let it rest.” Here Hermann stopped short in his narration and looked down, with a flushed and troubled face.

Less intelligence than Tāntawee possessed might, under the circumstances of the story and its teller, have sufficed to divine in a general way the nature both of the occurrence and of the loss thus alluded to by his young friend. He considered a moment, and then said, in a tone of studied cheerfulness,—

“What was it that happened to you there? Tell me, my dear fellow; you may rely on my keeping the knowledge of it to myself; and I for my part cannot consent to remain in ignorance of anything that so nearly concerns you, as, by your manner, this would seem to do.”

Having said this, he put his hand gently on Hermann's shoulder, adding, "And then?" The request was, perhaps, dictated in part by curiosity, but more by the sincere sympathy which is proper to all large minds. Hermann felt and valued it, yet could scarcely even then bring himself to comply.

"Let me alone," he answered without looking up. "I shall certainly break down and make a fool of myself if I try to tell it. Besides it is useless to recur to it now;—that cord has been cut for ever."

"How are you so certain that it has been indeed so cut? Surely, she is not dead?" rejoined the Arab Beg, aiming a conjectural arrow in the dark.

Hermann suddenly raised his head. "Dead? no, I trust! God forbid that. But how did you come to say 'she'? who told you about her? Have you then heard any news of her?"

If so, for God's sake let me know it at once," he added with almost painful eagerness of voice and manner. Tanṭawee smiled.

"As if I needed," said he, "to be told in so many words that there was a woman of some sort in the affair; or to hope, for your sake any how, that she is yet alive and well. More how should I know? I who am ignorant of her very name and parentage, that is, till you choose to tell me. Why, your own expressions, boy, have as good as acknowledged that you fell in love; and yet, from your tone in speaking of it, I see no reason why I should not hope that the object of your love is now alive." He then continued in a more serious manner, "Come, my brother; now that you have let me this far into the secret, you may as well make me your confidant for the rest. God is merciful; perhaps I may be of use to you

even in this ; ‘ Help cometh from whence thou knowest, and from whence thou knowest not ’ ; must I,”—with a slight smile,—“ quote the Koran to you, who are so much better a Mahometan than myself ? ”

The German’s face brightened up a little, but he made no direct reply. He looked silently over the ship’s side, first towards the distant blue outline of the Syrian coast, then just coming into sight above the low-lying haze of noon ; next he gazed into the dark-blue water close at hand under the ship ; at last, with an altered and somewhat thickened voice, which however cleared as he continued, he resumed his narrative.

“ More than a week had already passed since our first arrival at Diar-Bekr, when, one lovely morning, I felt irresistibly inclined to spend an idle hour or two in the garden I just now mentioned, there to enjoy at leisure the

bright sun and the fresh air, of both of which there was a grievous deficiency in the khan where we lodged within the town. Sa'eed, who was always willing to do me a friendly turn, had promised that he would be ready at hand to attend the Pasha's call, and replace me in case my services were required during my absence ; and our master's easy temper might safely be relied on to take no serious notice of so immaterial a substitution.

“ This arrangement made, I went out alone in the town ; and, passing under the high-arched town gates, followed a narrow paved lane, fenced in by blind walls on either side, and dark with overhanging trees, till I reached a low door which gave a private and scarcely observable entrance into Rustoom Beg's garden.

“ Here I wandered about in search of a quiet corner to sit in, and soon perceived at the

farther end of the inclosure, a good way off the beg's own house, a pretty little kiosk, two storeys high. The green shutters of the windows were closed, and the entrance-door locked; but, on looking up, I perceived that half the lower or ground storey was covered by a flat plaster roof, the other half only being crowned by the upper room. It now occurred to me that this open piece of roof, which was, I should say, some twelve or thirteen feet only distant from the ground, would of all others be the place best fitted for my present purpose, namely, the combined enjoyment of solitude, laziness, and fresh air; while its seclusion seemed likely to secure me against any untimely disturbance. One difficulty only remained; the inside was shut, and there were no steps on the outside by which to get up; but, for my good luck, there grew not far from the wall of the kiosk

a tall pear-tree, and the branches sloped most conveniently towards the building. So, clambering up the tree till I came to the nearest point of approximation, I half dropped, half sprang on the terrace. Once there, I took a survey of my position.

“It commanded a lovely though not an extensive view. The height of the roof itself, joined to the slightly rising ground on which the summer-house was built, enabled me just to overlook the low fruit-trees and their tangled branches, which now formed a mottled network of bursting spring : white, pink, and tender green, all over the garden. Close by me, one great tree,—I fancy I see it yet,—a sort of Persian acacia, towered far up above the rest, and thrust forth heavy spikes of lilac flowers amid its exuberant leaves ; elsewhere a few aspiring boughs started up at random between me and the farther horizon, but did not wholly conceal it.

“ On one side, the left, I could distinguish, a good hundred yards off, the lattices and painted walls of Rustoom Beg’s house, partially visible through the openings in the foliage; but by a little care in selecting my post, I found that I could put the impenetrable mass of the acacia-tree between myself and any danger of observation from that quarter. On the other side, near my right, was the brown stone and earth wall of another garden, even more thickly planted, it seemed, than that in which I was; and from thence, through a screen of vigorous evergreens, mingled with rose-bushes and other shrubs, and full of chirping fluttering birds, I could hear issuing the fitful plash of a running fountain. Beyond this second garden stretched a long house-roof, just showing a range of windows apparently belonging to a haram, for all were closely latticed. A small white minaret, that

of some suburban mosque, peeped over the roof-line; there were no other signs of buildings in that quarter.

“But in front of where I stood, looking towards the south-east, a break among the rounded clusters of the tree-tops, indicated where flowed the rapid Tigris,¹ now in its spring-flood; and farther on I caught silvery gleams of the river-windings here and there; more distant rose on the extreme plain the blue summits of the Karajah-Dagh range, bare and sharp from out the dark thickets that patched the mountain-sides. Of the town itself hardly anything was visible; the small upper room, against the wall of which I leaned, but into which I could not obtain entrance, shut it out from view.”

Here Hermann abruptly broke off. Then,

¹ The Arab name is Dijleh, but I substitute the other, because better known.

“You may wonder, perhaps,” he said, “I almost do so myself, at my minute remembrance of all these objects and circumstances ; but the fact is that I have so often re-pictured them every one in my imagination, that forgetfulness of the smallest detail would be much more difficult to me than memory.”

He paused ; but Tanṭawee said nothing, awaiting in silence till the narrator should of himself resume his tale, which, though not without an evident effort, at last he did.

“The sun was warm as well as bright. I drew back from the heat of its rays into the shade afforded by the acacia on my right hand, seated myself comfortably with my back against the upper chamber wall, lighted a small travelling-pipe which I usually carried about with me, and felt,—for one who had so lately been a European and a Christian,—very Mahometan, Oriental, and imaginative.

“Through the light curls of blue smoke that hung before me slowly widening in the still warm air, the world seemed to lie open at my feet. I was young, strong, healthy, and,—at any rate I thought so, smile as you may,—handsome, clever, and perfectly fearless. Why should not I, as so many others had already done, make the East my home, its customs my customs, its people my people, its prophet my prophet, and its God my God? — [here Ṭanṭawee smiled in good earnest, but with a very sarcastic smile,]—why not win its fortunes, and live its best and most prosperous life?” To have commenced my career as a slave, was, I already knew, no obstacle; a help, rather, to the highest success.

“Then my mood changed, though why I could not tell, and another train of thought succeeded. It carried me back to the Saxon

townlet of my birth, and my father's old house near the gate; the half-wild garden around me recalled to my mind, as though in bitter irony, the careful cultivation of our commonest fields; the crumbling plaster of the kiosk walls at my side contrasted with the memory of the well-maintained neatness of our poorest dwellings; the Karajah mountains conjured up before me the Carpathians; the Tigris brought back the Danube. How loved and lovely those! how weary these! I remembered, too, the intelligent converse, the prudent forethought, the steady diligence of our German townsmen, the busy honesty, the healthful home-life of our villagers; and all the bright visions of but a minute past were dimmed and faded away as I sadly thought how one hour of such life, now mine no longer, one acre of Europe, were in truth worth more than long years of dreamy

Eastern listlessness, and a whole kingdom of unfertilized unprofitable Asia.

“ This mood, also, as the former had done, passed over me like the swell of a deep ocean wave on a calm day, and did not return. I knew not that it was the death-throe of a past life, the birth-throb of a new one.

“ Meanwhile, two hours must have elapsed, during which time I had filled and smoked three pipes, and had finally settled down into a state of mind neither precisely desponding nor cheerful, but calm, somewhat serious, and, on the whole, inclining to a not ungrateful melancholy. I was, in a manner, at home, yet a stranger ; I had many hopes, but many regrets also.

“ Noon drew on ; the sun mounted higher and higher ; the birds were silent under the leaves ; the shadow of my acacia-tree narrowed up against the wall, and the hot glare was

fast encroaching on the shelter in which I sat. I began to think that it was time for me to return to matter-of-fact life, and to see what my companions were after, and whether the Pasha might not have discovered and been displeased at my absence ; but I felt too lazy to do so at once, and half wished that some one would come to fetch me off, and so give me an immediate motive for quitting my retreat.

“While thus undecided, and idly lingering on from one minute to another, I heard a sound as of several voices in the garden : not Rustoom Beg’s garden, but that on the other side of the wall, on my right. At first I scarcely gave them any attention ; but they continued, and sounded so lively and cheerful, that my curiosity was ultimately awakened. So I rose, and coming forward to the extreme edge of the roof, gazed over the nearer fruit-

trees into the dense mass of green spread out beyond, whence the voices, which by their tone did not seem to be those of men, nor even of women, but rather of girls at play, proceeded distincter than before. A kind of furrow-like depression in the bough-tops indicated that the trees thereabouts were parted into a narrow avenue, and a thick clump at the hither end looked like the leafy dome of a natural arbour.

“Gazing down where the foliage was thinner, and the boughs interlaced less jealously over the path beneath, I discerned, much to my satisfaction; the glance of figures, female beyond a doubt,—in light-coloured dresses, moving to and fro; while, from the rapid changes in their posture, and the frequency of their bright sudden laugh, I conjectured them, and rightly, to be engaged in some girlish sport. Whoever the players might

be, they were certainly quite unconscious of being overlooked; and I had full leisure to watch their game as best I might,—not without a growing eagerness for a better view. It was some time before I obtained it; at last, through a gap in the leaves, I caught sight of a face, a tolerably pretty one, but—oh! disappointment—of a dusky brown colour,—an Abyssinian's, it seemed. As it happened, the eyes were fortunately directed elsewhere, and did not take cognizance of me. 'Girls,' said I to myself, 'and, beyond question, belonging to the big house yonder; they have, I suppose, come out of the haram for a romp in the garden: only slave-girls after all; that dark-skinned young lady is evidently one of the category. Best so, perhaps, since thus I run no serious risk by prying.'

¹The rooms allotted exclusively to female and domestic uses.

“With somewhat abated interest I continued to watch the leafy openings; not, however, in hopes of seeing through them anything much superior to what had already appeared, and intending soon to descend from my look-out, and return as I had come. I was mistaken,—fatally mistaken, some would say,—you for one, perhaps. I will not say so.

“The very next face that came, as though in a framework of foliage and flowers, before me, was as fair as the first had been dark,—only the hair, the eyebrows, and the eyes were deep brown, almost black, and the cheeks ruddy with health. Round the white forehead, and noosing the long tresses behind, ran a slender band of crimson velvet, sealed with gold; gold ornaments also were tangled in the glossy hair. Of form and stature I could at the moment distinguish nothing,

except a few gleams of a white dress, indistinctly seen through the net-like boughs; but I felt sure that the beauty unseen fully corresponded to that on which I now for the first happy time fed my eyes,—they had never been so fed before.

“Everything else disappeared around me. I was still gazing,—and how could a lad of scarcely eighteen years of age refrain from gazing?—on that perfect face,—praise be to Him who created it,—forgetful in my eagerness alike of caution and concealment; when by chance,—if, indeed, chance it was, and not rather destiny, hers and mine,—the girl’s eyes turned in the direction where I half stood, half crouched forward on the narrow roof, and looked full into mine. An instant after she had moved away, and was hidden from my sight among the trees. A pause followed; then I heard a voice, her voice I

was sure,—a clear, bright voice like that of a singing bird,—calling out something, but what I could not understand, to the companions of her play. Whatever the words may have been, their meaning was soon made evident by the result ; for, after a few moments of seemingly capricious hurry and bustle, betrayed by the irregular movements of the shaken sprays overhead, there was a pattering sound as of many footsteps retreating in the direction of the house.

“ When every one else was gone, and all was quiet around, she, the same, came gently, almost stealthily, forward to an opening among the trees, and fixed her gaze steadily on me, scanning me with calm, deliberate inquiry ; while I, emboldened by I knew not what hope, leaned towards her from the low roof-parapet, with a look undoubtedly expressive of the admiration I felt.

When she had well surveyed me, she smiled,—not passingly, but with a purposed smile of satisfied good-will; then waited till I, recovering in a measure my dazed perceptions, acknowledged with look and gesture the meaning of her smile. She then turned her face upwards, and pointing with her finger, slowly moved it along the sky till it indicated the quarter of the afternoon sun; raised both hands a little to each side of the head,¹ and looked inquiringly towards me. Love's guesses are quick, but sure; I understood that she meant to designate the period of 'Aşr,² and that she and I might then have an opportunity of meeting: gladly I nodded intelligence and assent. Once more

¹ The position assumed by those who make the Mahometan call to prayer.

² 'Aşr is half-way between noon and sunset; it is the third of the five times appointed for daily prayer among Mahometans.

she smiled,—a smile of joyous cheerfulness that would alone have sufficed to enslave a heart much more difficult of conquest than mine,—and instantly after disappeared amid the grove. I waited, without thought or motion, till the last real or fancied indication of her presence had vanished from sight and hearing; even then I remained where I was standing for a few minutes longer on my now lonely watching place, dazzled with sunlight, hope, and love.

“Rousing myself at last by the remembrance of the promised afternoon, I scrambled down to the ground, and, carefully avoiding the risk of observation, crept back out of the enclosure, whence, with superfluous circuitousness, I made my homeward way to the khan. There I learnt from Sa’eed that no inquiries had been made about me during my three hours of absence: so far all was

well. Next followed an interval of strange unreality, most like a waking dream; in which my outer self was conversing with my travelling comrades about their morning doings, and saying as little as possible about my own, while with the others I partook of our customary noonday curds, bread, and white cheese; and afterwards sat with them idly smoking a nargheelah, during the dead time of day between noon and 'Aṣr, in a room that seemed to me like a closed prison, and hours that would not come to an end. Inwardly I was occupied all the time in devising some plausible pretext for slipping away again alone unobserved; Pasha, master, journey, comrades, and the rest had suddenly become for me mere unmeaning phantoms; and the only truth of life seemed to be in that garden, across that wall.

“Unable to bear it longer, I made some unmeaning excuse for my restlessness, and left the khan a good half hour before the appointed moment. Traversing town and gardens I reached the inclosure, which I entered, not by the door as hitherto, but through a broken-down aperture in the wall, near the kiosk. No need to say how guardedly, how cautiously, I crept on between bush and tree, how I dreaded to meet some servant, some gardener, anybody; a dog even would have alarmed me. Luckily everything lay hushed and quiet in the warm sleepy afternoon; neither men nor dogs were stirring.

“With greater circumspection than I had used the time before, I clomb the pear-tree by the kiosk side, dropped warily on the roof, and waited with anxious impatience the call to the prayers of 'Aṣr; though not

exactly, I allow, in the intention of taking part in them myself. One moment I feared that they must somehow be over, and have passed unobserved : the next, that by some strange and unprecedented chance they would never be announced that day. So I sat, my eyes riveted on the upper gallery of the minaret just visible above the roof-line of the house,—her house, as I now was aware ; till, after what appeared to me an endless delay, I saw a figure, dark-cloaked and white-turbaned, issue slowly from the little side door of the tower, and pause awhile ; then it raised its hands and uttered the 'Idan,¹ the welcome cry, that burst almost simultaneously out, from distance to distance, over the entire town where it lay hidden

¹ The call, "God is most great," and the rest, with which Mahometans preface every act of public worship.

behind me. But minaret, crier, and prayers, were no longer anything to me ; I had now neither ears nor eyes, except for the well-noted spot in the adjoining garden ; and in its direction sight and hearing were stretched, but at first to no purpose.

“ Five minutes, hours I thought then, passed ; then some way off to the left, I heard a faint rustle, a footfall ; next a small white pebble was thrown over the garden-wall from the same direction ; an instant later, a second pebble followed ; and a low chirp, resembling the call of a wood-bird, was thrice repeated. Without hesitation, I crept softly down from the terrace, and regained the ground ; then went crouching along close under the wall towards the spot designated by the fall of the pebbles ; the earth was damp in shadow, and the high reedy grass, and spreading bramble bushes

that sprung up here, would have sufficed to screen me from view had there been spies at hand ; but there were none.

“Following on I came unexpectedly on what must once have been a gateway of communication between the two gardens, but had since been roughly blocked up with large unmortared stones ; one of these had been recently displaced, and a fresh green spray had been thrust through the crevice, so as to cross my path, and compel my notice. I stopped, removed the bough, and, peeping through the narrow aperture, discovered the peculiar whiteness of a female dress on the other side ; while I heard an encouraging ‘Bismillah’¹ gently whispered, in a tone that to my ears gave it the more

¹ “In the name of God,” a phrase with which Mahometans inaugurate every action, whether intending to perform it themselves, or inviting others to do so.

special meaning of 'Come, I am here waiting for you.'

"To wrench out and to lay aside, noiselessly though quickly, a few more of the uncemented fragments, was the work of hardly a couple of minutes. A sufficient opening was formed. I crept through, found myself on the inner side, regained my feet, and at the same instant, by my very first forward movement, held her whom I sought in my arms. She had drawn her veil over her face, and was standing quiet and wholly unexpectant of so impetuous a greeting. But my passionate curiosity, now wrought up by protracted expectation to its highest pitch, gave no time for check or parley; and all her laughing resistance did not hinder my raising the light gauze from her features, and saluting her,—as any lad of eighteen would have saluted any girl under like circumstances.

“On my life, Tanṭawee, believe me or not, I had thus far intended nothing more. I did not know my own heart ; I knew hers still less. A boyish freak, an adventure, a stolen kiss, a laugh, a short hour’s pleasant chat, perhaps another kiss at parting, and so home ; if I had anything in my mind, that was all. But when, hastily disentangling herself from my hold, she drew back with a gesture of disapproval, and I saw her there before me, her unveiled face all in a glow, and looking half astonished reproof, half smiling pardon, I was at once abashed, overcome, entranced, enslaved, and,”—Hermann added slowly and in an undertone,—“enslaved, come what may, for ever. I blushed till I felt my very scalp burn ; and stood mute and helpless in her presence, like one waiting his award of death or life from a word, a sign ; without thought, will, or being

of my own but what she might herself please to give me."

"Very lover-like, if not very wise," interposed Tanta-wee; "and good proof that either you were very susceptible, or she very beautiful; or both, perhaps. Can you describe her to me?"

Hermann replied, — "I have already told you that she was fair, bright-complexioned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed; further, she was tall, nearly of my height; her age about two years less than mine, that is, scarce sixteen. God!" he added with a vehement outburst, "what shall I say of her, what should I say? Words can only dishonour that perfect beauty.

"With a look that at once implied command and imposed caution, and putting her finger on her lips, she made me sign to follow her. We went on through a thick tangle of laurel-

bushes, she leading the way, and always keeping close to the wall, till we reached a sort of recess, formed by the ruin of what must once have been a small outhouse, now more than half unroofed, and branched over by garden-trees on every side; a little clambering over a fragment of wall brought us into the interior: it was an absolute hiding-place. Once within, my guide seated herself, and indicated to me a place close beside her. I sat down, but did not venture to speak first.

“‘You are one of Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo’s men, are you not?’ she asked.

“I answered, ‘Yes.’

“‘Tell me, then, your history; who you are, whence you came, and how you were brought into his service. I have heard,’ she continued, ‘the strangest stories about you, and I wish to know the truth from yourself.

Speak out, my brother, fear nothing. I am your sister, and will not betray you to harm ; do you doubt me ?’

“She spoke gently, affectionately ; every word of hers, but most ‘brother,’ and ‘sister,’ thrilled me with a flow of life unknown to me before. Yet there was in her manner a something of decision and authority, which would have of itself obliged me, even had I been less inclined than I was, to give her, as I now unhesitatingly did, an exact though concise account of my past years, and more particularly of the circumstances which had resulted in bringing me to Diar-Bekr.

“When I had finished, she smiled her own sweet smile ; said ‘I knew already from your looks that you could not fail to be of good race and family ;’ and gave me her hand.

“I kissed it, this time not less respectfully

than lovingly; and, still holding it in mine, for she did not withdraw it, said, 'And now, my sister, I have told you all about myself; but who are you?'

" 'I am,' she answered, 'the daughter of the Sheykh¹ Asa'ad the Sheybanee. They call me Zahra'; and my father is by marriage connected, though he hardly likes to own it, with Rustoom Agha, the very same on the roof of whose kiosk I saw you this noon. The house and the garden in which you now are belong to us; but the greater portion of our land lies westerly, all along the river, below the bridge. And,' she added laughingly, 'that your curiosity may be fully satisfied, I have two elder brothers, but no sister.'

" 'Asa'ad the Sheybanee,' I repeated; 'that is not a Turkish sounding name.'

¹ A title given to any elderly and respectable man of a tribe, but not necessarily implying authority.

“‘Certainly it is not,’ she replied, with a look almost of contempt ; ‘it is Arab, and of the best of the Arabs. Our family,’ she went on, ‘is a principal one among the great tribe of Benoo-Sheyban ; a branch, if you know it not, of the famous Rabeea’h Clan, settled here from the oldest times, long before the Prophet ; and of whom a few families yet survive in these northern lands, untainted by Turkish or Persian blood ; and of such are we.’

“‘Dearest Zahra’, my sister, my love,’ said I, ‘be of what race and family you may, you are for me the noblest as the loveliest upon earth.’

“She laughed again. ‘My little brother Ahmed, you are yet a stranger in these our countries ; wait a few years more, and you will begin to understand the true value of blood, and what is noble, what base. Mean-

while, to our family pride you are already indebted for thus much, that I am here on the present day to meet you ; otherwise,' with something of a sigh, 'it might not have been so.'

"Eagerly I inquired her meaning. After some reserve on her part, which yielded only to the impetuosity of my questioning, she told me that she had been for a long while past repeatedly demanded in marriage by Begs and Aghas,¹ of the land ; but that the Sheykh, her father, holding all these visitors for little better than 'Ajem,² had rejected them, and instead had betrothed her to a distant cousin from among their own tribe of Benoo-Sheyban, now among lances

¹ The former of these titles corresponds more or less to our "Sir," and is most often hereditary ; the latter to our "Esquire," and is personal ; both have a semi-military significance.

² Barbarians.

and camels in the uplands of Nejd.¹ In a word, to a well-to-do young Bedouin chief, by name the Emeer² Daghfel ; who was on some future day to come and claim her for his own, and take her with him back to the south. For the moment, a family feud, no rare occurrence in the tribe, had delayed the favoured cousin's arrival at Diar-Bekr ; but he was expected there towards the end of the year, or, at furthest, in the following spring.

“ All this she explained to me in a very simple matter-of-fact way, yet hesitatingly at times, and with an evident reluctance that appeared to have for object quite as much the facts themselves, as the recounting of them. While she was speaking I remained silent,

¹ Central Arabia, the word means “ highlands.”

² This is a title of authority given to the head or leader of a clan.

stupidly gazing at the chequered sunlight on the wall of the shed, but inwardly in a tumult of passion that increased every moment. A thousand projects crossed my mind, countless plans and chances; all alike fatal to the hopes of my Arab rival,—for such I already considered the Emeer Daghfel, God curse him,—and favourable to my own; and all alike impossible. After a pause she turned towards me.

“ ‘My dear brother,’ she re-commenced in a more cheerful, yet a tender tone; ‘what are you so deep in thought about? why do you torment yourself with these things? What will be, will be. Let the present suffice, the future belongs to God.’

“As she spoke I leaned somewhat forward, and looked her full in the face. There was a new glow on her cheek, a brightness in her eye. I could not, all inexperienced as I

was, consciously read their meaning, but I felt it; and I knew within myself that which my reasoned thoughts could neither comprehend nor reach.

“‘The present!’ I exclaimed, ‘let it suffice! you tell me. But, O my sister, answer me, in God’s name answer me, what is then the present?’ I choked as I said it.

“‘It is yours, all yours, Aḥmed, my brother.’ She dropped her look with the words. Her hand, white, slender, yet firmly knit, lay in mine; I pressed it; the pressure was returned.

“‘Zahra’!’ She raised her head; her eyes met mine. ‘Zahra’, do you love me?’ Both her hands were clasped between mine as I said it.

“‘I do,’ she answered.

“All was still; the head of each leaned on the other’s neck. Hope, fear, thought, past,

future, everything had vanished from before me; I only knew that I was loved—that I loved, and was happy.

“The sun-rays at our feet moved upwards, and glowed full on us where we sat. Again, but now with greater freedom of feeling and speech, we were engaged in talk and laugh, in question and answer; we seemed to be really brother and sister brought up together from childhood. You smile incredulously, Ṭaṇṭawee; but I tell you that such was the entire excellence of her maiden purity, such the simple dignity of her undoubting frankness, that instead of being tempted to presume on her avowed affection, I now became more than ever ashamed of my own first boyish coarseness of demeanour; and imagined her, or anyhow thought that I imagined her, a newly-acquired sister, in whom I felt, revived and intensified tenfold, all the long-repressed

affections and memories of family and home. It was not only thus, it was far more, but I did not know it then ; I knew it afterwards, but not that hour nor that day."

"Jameel and Botheynah, or Mejnoon-'Aamir and Leyla¹ over again," remarked Tāntawee. "To make love with much warmth, yet more self-restraint; to be content to give and receive the assurance of longing love alone, without hope of attainment, as though the mind were everything and the body nothing; and thus to remain through every vicissitude of life, constant to honour in spite of opportunity, to virtue in spite of passion, and to attachment in spite of separation, however prolonged; and all this till the hour of death itself, an hour welcomed as the seal of inviolable

¹ Celebrated Arab lovers; Jameel and Mejnoon were both first-rate poets.

fidelity. This is a thing, I believe, of no rare occurrence among Arab youths and maidens ; at least it was so before the gross lessons of Mahometan materialism. Indeed those lessons have been but partially learnt even now, thank Heaven, by the Arab tribes in their own native land ; though thoroughly appreciated and practised by Turks, Koordes, Persians, and their like. The wonder to me is, not that your Zahra' should have been such, but how her refinement and self-command communicated themselves to, or at least subdued, your coarser European nature."

Hermann listened thoughtfully ; then continued.

" All this I understood afterwards, and I felt it even then, indistinctly indeed, yet enough to impose on me a sense of bashfulness, mixed with a kind of awe, as for a superior being, which intensified while it repressed the

daring of more passionate desire. But I was less disposed to analyse than to enjoy. Enough; we remained thus, forgetful, I at least, of the world and all belonging to it outside of our happy hiding-place; till the lengthening sunbeams, breaking in more and more level through the leafy screen around us, warned us of approaching evening. She was the first to give the sign of parting.

“‘And when again, dearest Zahra?’” said I, as I clasped her hands within mine.

“‘Not to-morrow,’ she answered; ‘there might be danger; but the day after, early in the morning, at the first call to prayer¹ you will find me here.’”

“I pleaded hard for a meeting the very next day; but she instead repeated her cautioning, and warned me against rashness

¹ About an hour and a quarter before sunrise.

and the perils that it might bring upon us both ; while I could not but admit that she knew best. Reluctantly I assented to the more distant date. We rose ; she held out her hand ; I kissed it ; then, urged by a sudden impulse which I could not resist, I clasped her once more in my arms. She sighed, then smiled, and returned my embrace. Stooping down, I snatched a small blue flower from the ground close by, and thrust it into the breast-fold of her dress. She looked round an instant for something to reciprocate the pledge ; then hastily detached a thin gold coin from among the many plaited in her long dark hair, and gave it me : I shall carry it to my grave, if I ever have one."

Hermann broke off, and, with a half-instinctive movement, put his hand to his breast, paused, and then more deliberately

drew out a little leather pouch, black and embroidered with gold ; it was carefully sewn up, and a slender silver chain secured it about his neck. In silence he kissed it, and slowly returned it to its place ; then looked down over the ship's side, and drew his hand twice or thrice across his face.

“ Poor boy ! ” said Tāṭawee.

Both were silent for a few minutes. Hermann then looked up again, and resumed.

“ I could go on for ever with the story of those days, the twelve days that followed,—so fresh in my memory is every incident, every word, every look ; but it would do me little good, and would interest you still less. A dream, however vivid, remains, when told, a dream only, at least for the hearers ; and who cares for another man's dreams ? Let me then pass over in words that which never can pass from my heart :—it is my heart.

“We met five times more, always in the same place, and each time with increasing, deepening love ; yet in outward demonstration we were always true to ourselves, she naturally and of herself, I from her influence ; and we never overpassed the self-imposed limits of our first hour. She was my sister, I her brother,—she my queen, I her slave. Such was my dream, hers too perhaps ; the hour of waking had not arrived yet, certainly not for me.

“But the future ? How were we to maintain mutual knowledge of each other’s state, and even of our whereabouts ? My own departure was near ; and, besides, her betrothed suitor might arrive sooner than expected ? What assurance was there then of our meeting again ? and under what circumstances should we meet,—she and I ? and what would be in the end of it ? We dis-

cussed many plans,—most of them of my imagining rather than hers,—but could arrange nothing feasible. We could only refer ourselves to chance, destiny, Providence,—what you will,—and agree to be satisfied in the meantime as best we might with remembrance, and with the unshaken assurance that no separation, no change, could diminish our love. I, for my part, bore it much worse than she did, or outwardly seemed to do. Whatever may have been,—were, indeed, as I afterwards learnt too well,—her feelings, she veiled their intensity under a calm that was wholly beyond me. Had I been less sure of her heart, I might almost have imagined her indifferent to our parting. Grievously should I have wronged her; it was only the quiet composure of a strong, deep nature, too sure of itself to acknowledge the possibility of being influenced by circumstance

and change. Of the two I was much the less manly, and continued to suggest many wild and impracticable schemes, which she gently put aside.

“‘Till my cousin, the Emeer, arrives,’ said she, ‘I shall have no difficulty in keeping my own; and while here, I am to all intents mistress of myself and of my doings; nor do I think that there is much likelihood of his coming this year. It is certain that summer will have set in before matters can have quieted down among the clans in Nejd, and then Daghfel and his party must needs defer their journey hitherward till the cooler season. They will not be at Diar-Bekr, I can vouch for it, till next spring, at soonest. Meanwhile, you, Aḥmed,—clever, brave, handsome, likely lad that you are,—ought, if all goes right, to have got your freedom before the year is out, and then—’

“She paused, and continued in a lower voice,—‘No lock, you know, but patience has the key. You will, in one way or other, find out where I am; and be well assured that, tide what may, I shall ever be the same for you, Ahmed, my brother! my love!’

“She broke off, as if unwilling to trust herself longer to words. She had already given me, and I had noted down, the names of some Arab kinsmen of hers in the neighbourhood of Bagdad, from whom I might, by inquiry, get such general information about her people as would, united with the knowledge previously acquired, suffice to keep me acquainted with the leading circumstances of the family, and thus indirectly with her own.

“‘I shall cry often and bitterly till we meet again,’ said I. ‘Will you cry for me, Zahra?’ I do not think you will.’

“‘Yes, I shall; not much, perhaps, for I

am not usually given to crying,'—the tone of her words was cheerful, almost sportive, and I felt half ashamed of myself,—‘but I shall always think of you, day and night. We shall meet again yet.’

“I could not answer her; my words, my breath itself, were stifled in my throat. One last embrace, and we had parted. Under the broad gray dawn, now rapidly brightening into sunrise, I crept back through the garden and along the well-known lane; but all around me looked changed and strange. It seemed to me that at every step my very soul was being wrenched out of me,—as though it had been fixed there where I left her, and I had to pass on, moving, yet dead, soulless, lifeless.”

“Poor fellow!” again interjected Tanṭawee. And then—“Love at first sight, as in the stories.”

“I have often since thought that over,” said Hermann, “and wondered whether the common saying,—‘Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?’—be true in the ordinary run of cases, as it certainly was in mine. I know that in popular tales, such as are nightly recited to the audience of the *kaḥwah*, or at daytime in the street, the first meeting of those whom pre-existent sympathy in some former state of being, as you, I suppose, would explain it, or, to my thinking, the more matter-of-fact bias of mind, or matter, or both, in this world of ours, has determined for lovers, is of course a very important event, a sort of turning-point in life (though, indeed, life is, to say truth, all turning-points, only most often unremarked), not to be lightly passed over or feebly sketched in story.

“My own instance,” he continued, “did

certainly correspond with the favourite romance-type, that of 'Antarah, or Ghareeb,¹ and other heroes of tradition and the 'Thousand and One Nights.' Only I cannot but observe that all these are made-up histories; and in such it becomes necessary to introduce the lovers and their love, not less to the hearers, than to each other; a thing best done by a sudden and startling surprise,—a passion flaring up into full blaze the instant it has been kindled; and to this necessity of the narrator, rather than to the truth, I set down the wonderful efficacy which they attribute to first sight in almost every romance. But in real life I imagine that the whole matter is often very common-place, and so gradual that it is hardly noticed by the persons themselves, or even by those

¹ Two well-known Arab characters, famous in stories of love and war.

about them. And thus it may happen,—does, I suspect, happen in four instances out of five,—that Mejnoon and Leyla¹ have met and conversed together some ten, twenty, fifty times even before the first dream of love interrupts the previously total slumber of that capricious passion.”

Ṭanṭawee listened patiently ; then said, “You are getting as far out of my depth as, thank God, out of my experience ; still, so far as I can manage to understand your theory, I do not agree with it. On the contrary, what happened to you is, from all I hear on these matters, much the more common order of things, anyhow where love is concerned ; marriage, as every one knows, is quite a different affair.”

¹The names of these two have become proverbial in the East for sudden and passionate love.

“In these countries,” replied Hermann, “you may very likely be right; but I was thinking of the subject in a more general way. Though I was only a lad when kidnapped from Rosenau, I had already lived there long enough to see and to understand much of what went on about me, and to form a tolerably distinct idea of our own country manners and social condition; besides, it is a topic on which I have often reflected since.

“Now in Europe, you may perhaps have heard, there is no fixed barrier, or at most only a very slight one, between the every-day intercourse of the sexes; they inhabit the same rooms, sit at the same table, eat together, work together, play together; they are familiar with each others’ faces even before they have learned to think, let alone to love; and the sight of a pretty girl has nothing

in it to startle or overpower a youth of seventeen; unless, indeed, the beauty be very uncommon, or the circumstances exceptional. He and she, if of similar rank and station, have been trained at long hand to look on each other, first as playmates, then, it may be, as fellow scholars, as every-day companions, as friends; and thus the transition from acquaintance to love is imperceptible, step after step; it follows on thought and trial; nay, the intention of falling in love often, I believe, precedes the fact itself. Prosaic, you will say. It is not the less true though; and from my remembrances, however boyish, of Rosenau, Kronstadt, and the rest, I can assure you that what I have just described is generally the fact, at least among us Saxons."

"Very sensible, no doubt, though a trifle flat," rejoined Tāntāwee; "you, Aḥmed,

however, seem to have behaved like anything but a genuine Saxon in this respect, nor do I fancy that you would find many such prudent lovers as you make out those of your kith and kin to be, along the banks of the Tigris or among the palm-groves of Nejd."

"It is custom of life, not coldness of blood, that makes the difference with us," answered Hermann, not wishing his friend to form too low an estimate of the national heart, or of his in particular. "And it is, I think, precisely owing to the dissimilarity of social usage and intercourse that love here, in these Eastern regions, takes a different course."

"How do you mean?" asked his friend.

"I mean," said Hermann, "that in lands like those around us, or rather, alongside of us,"—giving a glance towards the Syrian

coast, the low purple outline of which had all that morning rimmed the sea-margin on the right, and now grew distincter every hour,—
“ In lands, I mean, where religion, or custom rather, has made social separation between man and woman the law, and intercourse the exception, one of two extremes must ordinarily follow. Either love cannot properly be said to exist at all from first to last, but is represented after a fashion by a passive acquiescence in the pre-arranged ordinances of parents and relatives, with now and then a tolerable attachment, more often absolute indifference, very rarely actual love, for its ultimate result; or the passion, dormant before, suddenly opens its eyes to find itself full-grown in presence of some fortuitous hap. This may easily happen where a youth and a girl, having already reached an age capable of love in its fullest sense, and having never

before loved or even met,—because never intended so much as to see each other, far less to love,—do yet by unforeseen circumstances come to meet. Then it is that the one meeting, by the very fact of its being unpremeditated and first, makes its entire impression at a blow, and becomes in good earnest the opening scene in a love romance, to end, not unfrequently, in a tragedy. For while the former, that is, the family contract proceeding, may be called the legitimate and regular method among you,—I mean us,—Muslims, the latter, is, on the contrary, unauthorized, and in a manner illegal, love ; nor is its course likely to run smoothly. Were it indeed all smooth, it would hardly be worth the following. And thus it fell out with Jameel and Botheyna, for instance, thus with Mejnoon-'Aamir and Leyla ; and thus, too, it was with me."

To this somewhat lengthy exposition, Tanṭawee Beg made no direct reply ; his mind had, while Hermann talked, been running on from thought to thought in quite an opposite direction, and while thus engaged he had dropped his tobacco-pouch, so that he was just then busied in scraping together the tobacco from the deck, and returning it to its proper place. Hermann, for his part, made no attempt to continue his social or psychological speculations ; but quietly filled his own pipe, lighted it, and smoked awhile in silence.

The ship drifted lazily on before a gentle, southerly breeze, over a sea of oily calm. With the exception of the two friends, almost every one, crew and passengers alike, lay stretched upon the planks in afternoon sleep.

Tanṭawee was the first to speak. "These topics," said he, "lie rather out of my line ; and I fear that even your Zahra' herself,—do

not scowl so, my dear boy, I meant nothing personal,—would not have produced much effect on me ; though I own that a pretty girl, in a pleasant garden, on a bright spring morning, must be something very seductive. But every man has his way. However, it is not her, but your own story and adventures that I care about, so pray go on with them. I am hungry and thirsty to learn all that befell you at Bagdad, and how you escaped safe thence, when the Pasha was killed. I heard of it at the time, of course ; it was talked of everywhere ; but I know no more of the real motives and circumstances of that dark affair than other people do, that is to say, next to nothing. You, I should think, must be more in the secret.”

“ Unhappily I am,” answered Hermann with a heavy sigh ; and continued his narration.

“ During the three weeks we spent at Diar-

Bekr, I noticed a great change in everything connected with our master, the Pasha. While a suppliant in Constantinople, he had affected a modest, almost a humble, appearance : his dress was plain, his lodgings not much better than those of any ordinary traveller ; and the number of the attendants with whom he arrived at the capital scarcely amounted to twenty. It is true that the additions made there raised his suite to forty or so before we left ; but till the last, his men were for the most part purposely dispersed in out-of-the-way khans, and in distant quarters of Stamboul ; nor did they at any time, appear all together, till we had already left behind us some hours of the road between Scutari and Ismid, on the other side of the water. Even during the long winter-journey through Anatolia, he seemed rather to avoid than to court notice ; and more than once we observed that he compelled our village guides

to take us, much to our annoyance, by circuitous and fatiguing bye-paths, simply in order the better to elude the ostentatious hospitalities of sundry Begs, Pashas, Governors, and the like, whose residence happened to be situated at such or such localities on the main road.

“Now all was changed. Before we had been three days housed in Diar-Bekr, a troop of fifty horsemen, very dusty, Koordes by their faces, but dressed and equipped after Arab fashion, with lances, swords, matchlocks, and pistols, arrived from Bagdad, to meet their lord the Pasha; and the profound obsequiousness of their manner toward him enabled me to conjecture, and not inaccurately, the importance of the position he had already occupied in his native town, no less than the brilliancy of that which he was now on his way to assume.

“ But besides this, he seemed in Diar-Bekr itself, judging by the demeanour of the inhabitants of the place, to be, during his stay there, the only person of note in the town. Visits, invitations, cavalcades, every mark of honour and respect were the order of the day. The higher the local dignitaries, the more eager they seemed to court his favour ; and even the common people, ranged in self-formed lines before the shops or along the roadside as he passed, saluted him with scarcely less reverence than they would have done the Sultan himself.

“ It is a fine thing to be governor of a province in the East, thought I, as I recalled to mind the comparative simplicity and scant attendance of our own more restricted officials. Yet I had when a child seen an Archduke of the Roman Empire make his public entry at Kronstadt, amid troops, music, triumphal

arches, and all manner of rejoicings. But the pomp which surrounded the Austrian Prince seemed after a fashion less personally his own ; and the respect shown him by our Saxons and Hungarians could in intensity bear no comparison with that manifested by the Arabs and Koordes of Diar-Bekr for the representative of the Ottoman Government.

“As to the Pasha himself, his manner, courteous, staid, and distant, was that of a man who receives nothing more than his natural and fully-expected due. When in public, his eyes were generally cast downward, and he seldom turned his head ; but if spoken to, he raised it, looked the speaker full in the face, and paused a little before answering, in a voice that effectually precluded any approach to familiarity. But although he conducted himself towards the outside world with so much reserve, not to say

haughtiness, to us, his personal attendants, and to me in particular, he was on the whole more affable and even good-natured than before ; though not always easily pleased, and apt at times to fall into a violent passion, when things were not to his liking.

“ At last, one forenoon, amid much horse-careering, pistol-firing, and wild tumult, and with a countless escort of respectful valedictory attendances, made up of Begs, Aghas, Sipaahees,¹ Mollas, and what not, who all politely insisted on accompanying us for the first five miles of the way, we left Diar-Bekr. Of my own individual feelings that day, known then to myself alone, I need not speak ; they left me but little heart for the share that I, perforce, outwardly took in the joyous

¹ The word here denotes land-owners on military tenure.

demonstrations and horsemanly freaks of my light-minded comrades. The pain which I now experienced was a different one from that which I had suffered when torn from house and home the year before ; it was more intense ; yet there was something inexpressibly delightful mingled with it ; and I cherished it, as I have seen a wounded panther hug the spear that transfixed him."

"Where did you see that?" interrupted Tanṭawee.

"In the valley of Nejran, on the frontiers of Yemen," briefly answered Hermann ; then went on.

"For a short time we skirted the Tigris ; then the river wound away on our left, and we rode forward over gently undulating meadows, till the last minaret of Diar-Bekr had sunk behind the dark tree-line in the distance, undiscernible even to my lingering

gaze. When our courtesy-escort had quitted us too, and our own band drew somewhat closer together, I observed that we now amounted to about a hundred horsemen. Before sunset we had reached the first entry of the long winding pass, or valley rather, leading to Mardeen; and here, by a clear spring of cool water, we pitched our tents; which, backed up by a considerable pile of baggage unloaded from the camels,—for a whole string of these ugly but useful beasts had been taken into our service at Diar-Bekr,—formed an imposing encampment.

“Next morning we were on our road again; but it took us four entire days to reach Mardeen, our marching-time being in general from sunrise till afternoon only; the evening and night we rested, while the Pasha’s Koordish or Arab horsemen kept guard by turns. Nor was this by any means a super-

fluous precaution ; for the peasants of these lands are mostly robbers also whenever they have an opportunity of becoming so. This we ourselves experienced ; for one moonless night, the very last before our arrival at Mardeen, a whole band of these extemporised marauders came prowling about us in the darkness, till they had almost found, unperceived, an entrance among the tents. Luckily the alarm was given in time, and the robbers met a suitable reception ; several shots were fired and returned almost at random ; two only of our people were slightly hurt. Probably our assailants had suffered more severely, for they scrambled off, under cover of the night, through the rocks and brushwood, and we heard no more of them. But next morning we found thick trails of blood on the grass. The wounded or dead had been, we supposed, carried away by their associates ;

less, perhaps, from mutual fidelity than from fear of detection. Much indignation was expressed on the occasion by the sub-Governor of Mardeen, where we arrived a few hours later ; and many were his proffers of search after the culprits. But our Pasha did not think it worth while to have any investigation made ; and I now see clearly that he was right ; though in my ignorance of the country, I then wondered at what I esteemed his unaccountable apathy on the subject.

“I was much interested,—indeed it was the first sight that gave me any pleasurable interest after our leaving Diar-Bekr,—with the giant crag of Mardeen, and its wonderful castle crowning the summit ; with the quaint stair-built town clinging to the yellow rock, and the heaped-up emerald foliage of the orchard below. Yet, fair as these scenes were, the comparatively monotonous view,

now open for the first time, of the boundless plain beyond, and the sensation that I was entering on a land entirely new, brought me, by its very novelty, more relief than all the rest from the clinging thoughts which thus far had haunted me by day and night on my way. The keenness, too, of first impressions must needs wear off by degrees, especially under the influence of a total change in all that surrounds."

"And more especially still in boyish youth," interposed Tāntāwee.

"True," replied Hermann, "but only in part; youth is not the same for every one." He continued,—

"Anyhow, there was nothing in the grassy expanse before us, broken only by the grey earth walls and dust heaps of some chance half-Arab village, or the mounded ruins of more populous ages past, that could in the

least recall to eye or mind the varied landscape of Diar-Bekr, as we slowly traced our way by the lower or Nisibeen¹ road to the battlemented fortress of Jezeerah,² and rejoined the Tigris.

“Turbid and full, the river eddied here round the precipitous spur of the Joodee rocks³ on its left shore; and we had some trouble about crossing, a feat accomplished by means of the keleks, or jar-supported rafts, proper to these regions. Our next prolonged halt (for at Mardeen we had only remained a day and a half) was Moşool, where we arrived two days later, and where, [for the

¹ The ancient Nisibis.

² Also called Jezeerat-'Omar; a small town on the right bank of the Tigris, half-way between Diar-Bekr and Moşool.

³ The mountain-range eastward is called “Joodee,” and is often, in Mahometan ideas, confounded with Mount Ararat, which bears the same name in the Koran.

first time in my life, I learnt what heat meant; for the Shelook¹ happened to be blowing, and clouds of fine warm dust filled the air.

“At Moşool² our reception was even more ceremonious than it had been at Diar-Bekr; and during eight days the uninterrupted honours of flattering, not to say servile, hospitality, hardly left us any repose. From the pasha down to the negroes, all of us were made much of, each by his set and after his fashion; in fact, every townsman, great or small, was ready to devote himself to our acquaintance and entertainment.

“Yet it was on the whole a heavy time

¹The Arab name for Sirocco, sometimes, but erroneously, confounded with the “Semoom,” or “poison-wind,” which is peculiar to the desert.

²A large town, on the left of the Tigris, opposite the ruins supposed of Nineveh, and well-known to Europeans since Mr. Layard’s researches in this neighbourhood.

for me; for no sooner was I in comparatively quiet quarters, and deprived of the immediate excitement and bustle of the journey, than the recollection of Diar-Bekr encompassed and shut me in; while an image,—her image,—stood before me, sad and half-reproachful, I thought, that I had left her thus alone; though, in very deed, I do not know how I could have done otherwise. In the midst of my merry companions, in street and *kaḥwah*, in mosque and khan, this image haunted me; till I was fain to get out alone among the grass-mounds without the town; and there, under the shadow of some broken cottage wall, the fleckless sky glowing overhead, and the lone waste before me, express to myself in such verse as I could the feelings which else I knew not how to utter.”

“ Let me hear your verses,—that is, if you

remember them," said Tanṭawee. "I am aware that you are something of a poet; and I daresay that the genuineness of your feelings gave you skill to render them less inadequately than is ordinarily the case with rhymers. Love poetry in general seems to me pitifully artificial; perhaps yours may have at any rate the merit,—if merit it be in such a matter,—of truth."

"Be it so," said Hermann, "here are some I have not forgotten; judge them as you will." And, in a low voice, he recited the following lines:—

"She spoke no word, she made no sign :
Nor word nor sign was needed there.
I kissed the face upturned to mine,
I clasped that bosom passing fair,
I smoothed aside the tangled hair
That wandered o'er her forehead white ;
And drunk with love and pleasure then,
The sunshine on the wall was bright,
And happiest I of living men.

“‘Love, say thou lov’st me.’ ‘Is not this
Proof of my love? What wouldst thou more?’
And smile on smile, and kiss on kiss,
The sudden treasures of love’s store,
And passion unsurmised before,
And joys that have no name on earth,
And the great ocean without shore,
Whence life and love and all has birth.

“And is it thou? and can it be?
How have I won so rare a prize?
How bloomed this flower, unsought by me,
Self-offered to unheeding eyes?
How rose this star on clouded skies
To usher in love’s better day?
O dearest joys, for ever last!
O loving heart, beside me stay!
O clasping arms, entwine me fast!”

“Passion enough, anyhow,” commented Tanṭawee, when Hermann had ended; “and more pity for you. A nature capable of intense happiness,—and that yours was such I do not doubt,—is capable also of much misery. But continue your story.” Hermann complied.

“While at Moşool, an incident occurred,

trifling in appearance, but important in its sequel. Sauntering one afternoon, idle and purposeless, through the narrow sook¹ of the town, I fell in with an Arab,—a Bedouin; he was strolling, like one half-astray, down the street in a direction opposite to mine, swinging his miḥjan,² and turning his head about from side to side with the furtive air proper to his race when within the circuit of brick-walls, where they seem to suspect a trap in every house-door, and an enemy in every citizen.

“Suddenly he stopped, with a ‘Hulloa, child!’ evidently addressed to me.

“‘What do you want of me?’ I replied, in such Arabic,—not overmuch, then, nor over correct,—as I could muster.

¹ An Arab market-place, or rather the quarter of a town occupied by shops.

² A light switch, generally of almond-tree, used by camel-riders in lieu of a horse-whip; a Bedouin is scarcely ever without one in his hands.

“ His answer, or rather his next query, was unintelligible to my ears, accustomed at best to the phrases and pronunciation of city life,—both, as you know, very different from those of the desert. Turning to a bystander, a Moşool tradesman apparently, I begged him to act interpreter between us; and by his help learned, after patiently waiting out what seemed more like a quarrel than a dialogue, that my Arab was one of the Benoo-Sheyban tribe, recently arrived here on cattle business; that he was now on his way to Diar-Bekr, where he had sheep to dispose of; and, that having conjectured me, from my style and equipments, to be one of the newly-arrived Pasha’s attendants, and fresh from Diar-Bekr, he wished to obtain from me the latest news of his kinsman, the Sheykh Asa’ad, to whom he was the bearer of family tidings and greetings from Nejd.

“Through my improvised interpreter, I replied that I had indeed come from Diar-Bekr ; that I had heard of his cousin,—uncle, it might be,—Sheykh Asa’ad ; that I had seen him myself, in the divan of his neighbour, Rustoom Beg ; and had left him, with all of his, thriving and in good health.

“I longed to make some counter-inquiries regarding the Emeer Daghfel and his movements ; but the Bedouin, with the uncere-
monious abruptness usual among his like, was already turning away, satisfied with the information he had got ; and to have detained him with questions that would have implied a strangely intimate acquaintance with family affairs, might give rise to dangerous suspicion. So I let him go ; and remained the rest of that day more anxious and abstracted than ever.

“Yet there was much around to occupy and divert my thoughts. Moşool is a curious

place ; it is the portal where North and South meet ; and a more motley set than its inhabitants I never saw,—Arabs, Turks, Koordes, Jews, Persians, Indians, Mahometans, Pagans, Yezedees, Christians, Shemseeeyeh,—”

“What do you mean by Shemseeeyeh ?” interposed Tāntawee.

“I do not exactly know myself,” was the answer ; “they are a class of people much resembling the ordinary Christians of these parts in outward appearance, men and women ; like them heavy-looking, and partial to heavy clothing. However they do not claim any kinship of blood or creed with the Christians of the place any more than with the Mohametans, but keep equally aloof from either ; nor do they ever marry except from among their own sect. I was told that they worship the sun, and thence their name ;¹ but I myself

¹ “Shems” is the Arabic for sun.

never saw them at their prayers, if they have any. Their principal dealings are with the Bedouins of the plain, who act as sheep-breeders and drivers on their account; some of them own in this way considerable flocks and herds, and are rich enough."

"Well; that will do for the Shemseeyeh," replied Tāntāwee; "and now, pray resume your own journey to Bagdad; I am impatient to hear what happened there."

Hermann went on.

"We were soon on the road again, and our faces turned towards our ultimate destination, Bagdad. At Moşool we had been joined by a fresh score of the Pasha's personal retainers; our horses had rested; we were all in excellent condition, and,—except perhaps myself,—in first-rate spirits. But it took us nearly four weeks yet to reach our goal. The track, a wearisome one at any season of the year,

had now become doubly so from the daily increasing heat ; indeed, when once arrived among the hillocks of Kerkook,¹ we betook ourselves to night travelling, by the light of the moon ; or, if that failed us, guided by the white shimmer, never wholly absent from the trodden ways, amid the darkness around.

“Our greatest difficulty was, however, in crossing the river Zab,² now at its highest rise, swollen from bank to bank, and rushing down snow cold from the Persian mountains to mingle its waters with the warmer Tigris. Some of our baggage-beasts were lost here ; and even our own rough-riders, though not new to exploits of this kind, had considerable

¹ A small town at about one-third distance on this stage of the high road.

² A very rapid river subject to great inundations in the spring, it flows from east to west, and falls into the Tigris, not far above Irbeel, the ancient Arbela of history.

difficulty in keeping themselves and their horses from being swept away by the flood which swirled and eddied around them, to the confusion alike of foot and hand and eye.

“Though I had never been in the like position before, I took kindly to it, and earned the applause of all, and the envy of many, by the unexpected boldness with which I dashed foremost into the water, and tracked out a fordable way; while the others were more cautiously feeling out their depth, and bewildering themselves in the search after the shallower patches of the current. My horse was a good one, and bore me bravely. Yet certainly, when our master himself commended my daring, and praised me in presence of all as we stood once more gathered and dripping wet on the southern bank, neither he nor any one else guessed to what my

courage was due. I had pictured to myself Zahra' on the opposite shore, and ridden straight for her."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Tāntawee.

"Nonsense it may have been," replied Hermann; "but nonsense of this kind is often the truest sense, and so it proved on this occasion.

"My master's good-will, already inclined towards me, was fairly acquired for ever after that day; and the sturdy negro Sa'eed, who had followed me closely into the water more from anxiety for my safety than from any other motive, and had emerged almost abreast with me out of the foaming ripple on the further bank, rendered me from that time forward the homage of an esteem sincere, because unalloyed by jealousy. So on we rode; till the mounded heaps of Kerkook lay behind us, and we

entered on the great alluvial plain of the lower Tigris, the famed 'Irak of history.

“Meanwhile, our band kept on steadily augmenting by the accession of little detachments of the Pasha’s men, who were in waiting for us here and there upon the road. We could not have been much less than two hundred persons in all before our journey’s end. By this time the differences of temper, formerly frequent causes of quarrel, arising from our varied nationalities, Bagdadee, Koorde, Arab, Greek, Croatian, German, or Negro, had been tolerably rubbed off by the mutual friction of travel; and, with few exceptions, we were a merry lot. Illuminated by the rays of our master’s splendour, each one of us shone a miniature sun, in his own eyes at least. The Pasha’s own immediate attendants, though most of them, like myself, purchased slaves, con-

sidered themselves much superior personages to the crowd of free horsemen; and were indeed looked up to by the others as such.

“ Like my companions I soon learned to regard the toiling peasants and shop-keeping townsmen among whom we passed, with the patronising contempt due from a superior to an inferior caste. We graciously accepted their offerings; sometimes too, I must allow, we took them by anticipation. However, the strict discipline generally maintained among us by the Pasha,—who, on the occurrence of any dispute between his men and the inhabitants had a habit, perhaps from a desire of popularity, perhaps from a sense of justice, of almost invariably deciding in favour of the latter,—kept us within reasonable bounds. Though fond of flattery and presents, and by no means incorruptible, subject to occasional outbreaks of severity,

not to say cruelty, when irritated, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo was steadily averse to unprovoked insult and wanton oppression of the weak, even where Christians, Jews, and such-like were in the case."

Ṭanṭawee looked at the narrator and smiled, ironically somewhat, but said nothing. Hermann continued.

"There was great stir at Bagdad on our arrival; and an endless procession, horse and foot, came forth from the city to meet and greet us while we were yet a good ten miles distance from the walls.

"The *kaḍee*¹ preceded; grave, white-bearded, and white-turbaned, a model of decorum; his very horse looked virtuous. The rider's slightly uplifted hand displayed

¹ Judge: the word is often written *kazee*, or *kazi*, in compliance with Turkish or Levantine pronunciation.

a small Koran ; to insinuate, no doubt, what the new Pasha and himself were supposed to regulate their conduct by. A long train of city dignitaries and grandees, mounted on high-blooded gaily caparisoned horses, more or less restive, followed in the rear. Coming up to us, all dismounted, the *ḵaḍee* the first ; our master,—whose stirrup I had the honour of holding,—did the same, and embraced, with great demonstration of respectful affection, the venerable judge ; who had been, as I afterwards learned, and the Pasha already well knew, a main intriguer against him ; but who now prudently acted up to the wise Arab adage, ‘Kiss the hand you cannot cut off.’

“The same hand-kissing, and, I dare say, equally sincere, not to mention osculations of hem of robe and foot, was next performed by a long sequence of minor

functionaries and chiefs. Followed gun-firing, pistol-firing, rocket-firing, squib-firing, to any amount, till I wondered what could be the price of powder in the Bagdad market; and the horses, already over excited by the crowd and noise, grew almost unmanageable. Some of them bolted; and more than one townsman was tumbled off in the thick dust, to the detriment of his gay silk robes, and the great diversion of the firmer-seated lookers on. In conclusion, what with all these introductory ceremonies, halts, and other delays, instead of reaching the city gates at the lucky hour of noon, as had been intended, we did not pass under them till the crier proclaimed from the minarets the unpropitious hour of 'Aṣr¹ late in the afternoon;

¹ This time of day is of all others considered the most unfavourable for the commencement of any undertaking; hence the current Arab proverb,

an ill-looking circumstance, and to which our poor master's subsequent tragic fortunes were by many sagaciously ascribed—after date.

“Of Bagdad itself, its noble situation between great river and boundless plain, of its gardens and palm-groves, its gilded mosques, vast market-place, stately mansions, and state-lie ruins, I need not tell you, Ṭanṭawee; you must have repeatedly had a full account of them from others. Though no longer the city of Manṣoor,¹ Haroon-er-Rasheed, and the Thousand and One Nights, it is not unworthy, even in its present decadence, to be the capital of an empire. As we passed along from street to street, the tall houses

“Better the evil of the morning than the good of the afternoon.”

¹ The Caliph, founder of Bagdad, about the year 760 a.c.

overshadowing us above, and the bustling crowd around us, I felt at first rather small, the more so from my being regarded as a mere unit, merged in the general denomination of attendants, or rather slaves.

“ This feeling, however, did not long weigh me down ; for when the hurry and confusion of our arrival was over, and we were all settled down in the Pasha’s splendid quarters, his own ancestral palace on the east bank of the Tigris, I speedily became,—within those walls at any rate,—a person of some importance. I was allowedly my master’s favourite attendant, taking the lead in pipe and coffee-serving when guests of distinction had to be received ; besides, I was often sent on confidential messages, such as are only entrusted to bearers whose fidelity and skill alike are reckoned at a high rate.

“ This promotion of mine was much facili-

tated by my aptitude at learning languages. Already, during the varied intercourse of the past months, I had, partly thanks to the lively gossip of the Bagdadees, and even more of the Africans around me, partly to a quick and attentive ear of my own, picked up sufficient Arabic for ordinary conversational purposes, in addition to great improvement in my Turkish. But at Bagdad the Pasha had me put to school, under the charge of a regular fakeeh,¹ who instructed me to such good purpose, that within a few more months I was able not only to talk and read Arabic correctly, but even to write a tolerable hand; besides,—which last accomplishment my instructor seemed to value most highly of all, though, I confess, I then did not,—retaining by heart a round half of the Koran. On the

¹ A learned man, a teacher, a schoolmaster.

whole, my life was far from unhappy, and my condition not a bad one, even in my own eyes ; in the eyes of those around me it was very enviable.

“My friend Michael, now Ghalib, the Croatian, could at last make himself tolerably understood in Turkish ; and had, besides, developed into a good rider, a capital shot, and a model of moustachios,—remaining all the while the same honest, thick-witted, short-spoken fellow that he was from the first. The negro Sa’eed continued, however, to be, in every place and under every circumstance, my best and steadiest friend ; we were close confidants on all subjects but one—the one too near my heart to find its way to my tongue. But Sa’eed, unlike myself and most of my comrades in serfdom, never had the least care to rise to personal independence,—a fine horse to ride, gay clothes, and silver-

mounted pistols and daggers in abundance formed the ultimate horizon of his aspirations; having now reached this, he was perfectly content, and never allowed more ambitious dreams to trouble the repose of present satisfaction.

“Not thus the two Greeks, Yoosuf and Dimitri, whose supple servility thinly covered, but did not veil, their restless longing for power, and yet more for money; to this they joined a capacity for intrigue unequalled even by the cunningest native of false 'Irak. Yet, though untrustworthy fellows, they were decidedly clever; and as such they stood high in the good graces of the Pasha, who was of an unsuspecting, and, indeed, of an over-confiding nature.

“The rogues had early noticed our trio,—I mean the negro, the Croatian, and myself, and they made many indirect efforts to be

admitted amongst us, but we distrusted and kept them aloof. I, too, had not forgotten the slight but ill-seeming incidents observed at Constantinople—Yoosuf's conduct in particular. With a Syrian, formerly a Christian of the description called Maronite,¹ I believe, they succeeded better. This man had, a couple of years before, fled from Syria on account, it was said, of some crime committed there, and had found his way to Bagdad, where, under the assumed name of Manşoor, he passed for a Mahometan, and being a good writer, had insinuated himself into the Pasha's service. These three formed on their side a close alliance of their own; felt, rather than declared, antagonistic to ours.

“It happened one day, when I had gone by my master's order, as bearer of some immediate

¹ A sect of Syro-Chaldean origin; their headquarters are in Mount Lebanon, near Beyroot.

message of his to the kadee, that the honourable judge, after many demonstrations of more than paternal amiability and special interest in my welfare, inquired in a seemingly casual manner, whether, during our stay at Constantinople, I had become acquainted with the Defterdar, Eyas Beg? A moment's consideration convinced me that a negative answer would be the most prudent one. I gave it accordingly; on which he changed the subject of conversation, and I shortly after left him.

“But the question, and the manner of putting it, connected with previous events, startled me; and I determined, without saying anything at the palace, to inquire further into the matter, in my own way and on my own account.

“Now so it was that an Arna'oot¹ of the town guard had married a girl once belonging

¹ An Albanian.

to the identical kadee's haram ; and in so doing had, in place of obtaining the advantages he expected, been sold a regular bargain. The girl herself proved to be not particularly good-looking ; that, however, was a disappointment for which he might, without much difficulty have consoled himself ; but there was also a far more serious cause of dissatisfaction, namely, that she did not bring with her one half,—no, nor one fourth even,—of the money and jewels expected by the bridegroom Agha, on the kadee's own assurance. Besides, there were valid reasons for suspecting that the deficient dowry was all the while lying stored in some corner of her former master's strong box. Lastly, the new khanum¹ assumed high and mighty airs, on the score of her old connections ; was exacting and extravagant ; and

¹ Lady ; a title used by Turks, Albanians, and the like.

treated her soldier-husband with as little deference as if he had been her servant, or less.

“Such a condition of things naturally led to ill-humour, ill-humour to quarrels, and quarrels to divorce. Well for the Arna’oot if the affair had ended there. But the lady, sure of support in the quarter where she wanted it, laid before her former patron, the *ḵaḍee*, a counter-claim against the luckless town-guardsmen for a very considerable sum, the estimated equivalent of imaginary jewellery and ornaments, which she, boldly, though without a vestige of proof, accused him of having taken from her by force or fraud, and disposed of to his own advantage. The *ḵaḍee*, of course, gave sentence in her favour; it was a gross injustice; the ex-husband had to pay, and was furious.

“From this man, thought I, it will be easy to learn everything I want regarding my

mealy-mouthed *kaḍee*. Now in a quiet nook of an alley, in the back-slums of the town, was a *kaḥwah*, small in frontage, but spacious within, where not coffee only, but wine, spirits, dice, and other things too, were to be had at will. It was a favourite resort of the divorcing Arna'oot, in company with certain others of his kind and race, whose Islam hung rather lightly on them. Though not myself one of that category, I knew the place well.

“Thither I went one night, and, as I had expected, found the Agha beguiling his troubles with gambling and drink. I sat down by him. We shared a glass or two of *rakee*,¹ and a throw or two of the dice. Before an hour had passed, my friend became quite confidential. I then put him on the

¹ The favourite spirituous drink of Christians, and of lax Mahometans, in the East. It is distilled from wine.

subject of the *kaḍee*; and he, nothing loth, told me of that functionary all the harm he knew, and a great deal more too, I daresay. The catalogue of vices was a comprehensive one: enough to have hanged ten ordinary criminals, at the least.

“There was much in what he related which I cared little to hear; but listened to it patiently on account of what else, more to my present purpose, might incidentally be introduced. Of this nature was what I now learnt for the first time regarding the ex-Armenian Eyas Beg; namely, that he was—though this I had already conjectured—a native of Bagdad, or rather of the village of Kelwad,¹ in its immediate neighbourhood; that in his early days he had been intimately connected—more in-

¹ A small town on the Tigris, south of Bagdad. The inhabitants are mainly Christians, and noted for vice and meanness.

timately, indeed, than honourably—with the *kaḍee*; and that he was still, in a manner, the agent of the latter at Constantinople.

“Next he told how, when the late governor of Bagdad had been deposed and imprisoned by order of the Porte, the *kaḍee* intrigued far and wide to obtain the vacant post for a brother-in-law of his own, one ‘Alee-Riza Effendee,¹ and had spent much money to that end; but that, having failed, he was using every endeavour to undermine the successful candidate, Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo, our master. Lastly, that the *kaḍee*’s brother-in-law, ‘Alee-Riza, had lately quitted Bagdad; ostensibly on a visit to Damascus, but really, it was thought, for Constantinople.

““Let the Pasha look to himself,” concluded the Arna’oot, ‘and see that he holds his own

¹ A title given only to civilians; in its current application it denotes no special rank.

when 'Alee-Riza returns. The Persian faction¹ of the town, with many of the principal Bagdadees themselves, are discontented, and will side with any one who can hold out to them the smallest prospect of a change in the present order of things. The *kaḍee* will help them underhand ; there will be traitors cheaply bought within the palace itself ; and as to the Ottomans of Stamboul, what is a Koorde more or less to them ? Indeed, I fancy that they would be by no means sorry at Constantinople to see Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo tripped up. The Turks are, I hear, jealous of his connections and influence in 'Irak ; besides, it suits them well to make 'Alee-Riza disburse pretty largely for the permission to do what, if he did not, they would themselves sooner or later pay to have done for them.'

¹ This is a large one in Bagdad.

“Such was the tenor of the soldier’s revelations. I imparted them next day to my two privy-counsellors, black and white, and we agreed to watch the two Greeks and their ally, the Maronite Mansoor, closer than ever, convinced that whatever mischief might be preparing withoutside of our master’s residence, they were sure to be acquainted with it, and to be ready to lend a helping hand within.

“They on their side fought shy, and avoided us all they could, though we, perforce, met continually, both on duty and off it; not only within the precincts of our common residence, the serey,¹ but almost everywhere else, in town and garden; for the fellows, especially the Greeks, seemed to have quicksilver in their veins, and were always on the move.

Palace : official residence of a pasha or governor.

But 'hearts have eyes,' as the proverb says, and we were mutual and deadly antagonists, though never a word, other than friendly, had passed between us.

"Externally everything went on smoothly as yet. The Pasha, though not without his secret enemies, those chiefly of whom I had heard a sample that night in the tavern, was, with the town and province at large, highly popular, and deserved to be so. He was certainly a rough governor, and too much addicted, perhaps, to summary measures, which he termed ready justice, and others called indiscriminating severity ; but on the other hand the better qualities which I mentioned before, and which rendered him a good master, rendered him also a more than ordinarily good ruler.

"His popularity was naturally reflected on his men ; and while it lasted we had a pleasant time of it. Work was light, and leisure plenty.

Indeed, except a short winter expedition towards the desert on the south-west, whither a party of us was sent to repress the plundering Muntefik Bedouins, and the result of which was one man wounded on our side, and three or four on theirs, beside a round thousand of camels driven off, and the country in general rather more impoverished than before ; and an occasional hunting-party, when we had to accompany the Pasha on a week's uncomfortable camping-out among the marshes and ditches of the Tigris lowlands, we remained at ease at Bagdad. There, what between friends, rivals, little intrigues, amusements, days in the gardens, evenings on the river, nights in the *kaḥwahs*, or at the *Kara-guz*,¹ and money in plenty to spend, the

¹ A kind of Eastern Punch. It is the ordinary supplement for theatrical exhibitions, of which there are none, strictly speaking, in the Levant ; not always a very decent one.

hours went quickly and cheerily by. Nor did I allow even the remembrance of my own German home to trouble me much ; so thoroughly another was the world I now lived in, so vivid in its varied newness, that the old faded daily away more and more into a confused dream, and its persons into shadows.

“ But it was not so with the one memory I had carried with me from Diar-Bekr ; that was to me an abiding, ever-present reality. There they were, the garden, the form, the face, the voice,—my Zahra’ ! And often did I lie awake at night, till the first sharp call to prayer spoke the coming dawn, thinking and thinking about her till I thought I should go mad. For the first hopeful excitement, the stirring reaction that followed close on the agony of parting, had now, under the pressure of time and fact, subsided into a weary despondency, to which even the memory

of her calm hopefulness, the assurance of her unchanging love, brought little relief; and turn and twist my probable or possible future as I might, I could make out no tangible chance of our meeting again till it would, reason whispered, be too late for meeting to avail except for despair. Of her truth, her constancy, I never doubted in these moments; I could as soon have doubted the sun at noon-day; but could even she escape the steady onward march of pre-arranged events? or could I have time or power to change their course? Hope I might; but what grounds had I for my hope? it was all mere idle self-deceit. Better to acknowledge the truth at once, however dreary, and give it over. No; for her sake I would not, I could not, succumb.

“So I tossed and turned. Now she seemed near at hand; now far off in interminable

distance. Then a wild imagination would come over me that she might,—heaven knows how,—have without my knowledge arrived at Bagdad, and be now there. And in this mood I would, for days together, turn round almost involuntarily to look after every woman, veiled, half-veiled, or even unveiled, that I met in the streets and lanes, as if I really expected to see her; though perfectly sure, so far as reason went, that it could not be she. Till I returned to myself, and said,—though the saying of it profited me little, except to realize my own craving want:—

“Betwixt us lies a sundering space
Of sunlight and of storm;
Yet in each face I seek thy face,
In every form thy form.

“Full well I know thou art not nigh,
I know thou canst not be;
Yet gather proof from every eye,
I may not hope for thee.”

“God in His mercy preserve me from fall-

ing in love," ejaculated Tanta-wee. Hermann took no notice, but continued :—

“The short winter of 'Irak came and passed; the early spring followed; and I was still servant and slave in the serey'; though my master, who grew fonder of me every day, often talked of giving me my liberty; sometimes of making me his khazneh-dar;¹ sometimes also, more often indeed than I at all relished, of providing me with a wife. I, on my side, was now more diligent than ever at my various duties; hoping by such conduct to win more quickly the opportunity and the means requisite for the much-longed-for return to Diar-Bekr. That return was to be, and soon; but how differently from what I had planned! how unlike all I had imagined!

¹ Head steward, or treasurer.

"It was in the month of Rejeb,¹ when 'Alee-Riza-Effendee actually arrived in Bagdad. He came very quietly, without any pomp of retinue, almost unobserved as it were ; and when, three days later, he paid his first visit of politeness to the Pasha, his bearing was humble and deferential, almost subservient.

"Yet rumours soon got abroad of mysterious messengers, and of nightly meetings at his or the kadee's house, in which men of the first importance in the town had a share; and even I, though, as you may suppose, not admitted into confidence on matters like these, witnessed more comings and goings, more underhand signs and half-whispers between the Effendee's followers and certain of our own palace, than I could explain by any

¹ The seventh month in the Mahometan year, and the second before the annual fast of Ramadan. These months, being lunar, coincide with all the seasons of the solar period successively.

justifiable cause. Sa'eed and some others shared my anxiety, and gave utterance to it. What the Pasha himself thought, or even how much he knew, remained for ever a secret to us. I suppose that his over-confidence in himself, and his haughty contempt for the intrigue and the intriguers alike, made him neglect, over-carelessly as it proved, the information that latterly can hardly have failed to be given him.

“Meanwhile spring advanced, an earlier spring than usual; the Tigris was swollen, and running down like a torrent close under our garden wall; the trees were, some in full flower, some, the apricots especially, already bore promise of fruit; the weather was growing hotter day by day. In compliance with the custom of the country, we were now all actively preparing to exchange the upper-floor rooms that we had hitherto inhabited, for

the underground cellar existence of a Bagdad summer.

“It was a glorious morning, and I was busy in the arrangement of the principal sirdab¹ for the accommodation of my master, who intended to take up his abode there in a few days. While I placed in order the cushions on the divan, and calculated the vacant space to be left for pipes, writing implements, and the like, I had leisure to relish the cool feel and the subdued greenish-yellow light that filled the cellar; giving the idea, I thought, of a semi-transparent vault under the sea, shone upon by the sun through some twenty feet depth of water. I was enjoying the originality of the place, and

¹ A long, low, vaulted room, at some depth below the ground-storey of the house. All the large dwellings in Bagdad are provided with such, as a retreat from the heat of the outer air in summer.

the ideas which it suggested, when Sa'eed entered in a stealthy manner.

“ ‘Are you here, Aḥmed Agha ?’ said he. ‘I have been looking for you all over the palace this half-hour.’

“ ‘What is the matter ?’ I asked.

“ ‘Nothing,’ answered the black ; ‘but I was uneasy, and wanted your company. Then, too, I have just seen Dimitri, the second Greek,—God curse the whole lot of them!—in the sook, talking very familiarly with one of ’Alee-Riza’s men. When they noticed me they left off talking, and separated, but when I had got to the other end of the street, I turned round, and saw them at it again.’

“ ‘There has been a great deal too much of this afoot lately,’ I replied. ‘Shall we speak about it to the Pasha ?’

“ ‘No,’ said Sa'eed, ‘better not now ; I

am afraid he might take it ill on our part. Let us wait a little, and see what comes next. Should there be symptoms of anything dangerous, we will try and give him a hint.'

"Two days later, the negro, mounted on a powerful horse of the Pasha's that he had taken out for exercise, was passing under the high wall of a garden immediately outside the town, when he saw 'Alee-Riza Effendee himself, and a troop of attendants, coming along the lane in an opposite direction, also on horseback. After the customary salutations, barely given and returned, Sa'eed drew up against the garden-wall to let them go by. They did so; but hardly had they ridden away a distance of twenty paces when one of them turned back, with a 'Hallo! my black brother!'

"'What do you want?' answered Sa'eed.

“‘You have dropped your purse on the way,—there it is, at your feet,’ called out the other: and Sa’eed, looking down to where he pointed on the ground, saw, in fact, a small knotted purse, almost buried by its own weight in the dust, on which it had evidently been just let fall.

“How it had really come there, and why, there could be no mistake; and Sa’eed was not the man to be purchased at that price. With the crooked end of a long switch that he had plucked a few minutes before from a plum-tree across the wall, he hooked up the heavy little pouch, and taking it in his hand rode quickly up to the speaker,—a Damascene; then, tossing it rather at than to him, said,—‘In your teeth, and in your master’s.’¹ The Damascene drew his sword

¹ The current Arab phrase here used will not bear literal translation.

in a rage, and aimed a blow at him, but missed. 'Alee-Riza himself hastened to interfere and stop the quarrel; and Sa'eed, having, negro fashion, uttered many violent things about their fathers, mothers, and so forth, rode away.

“This happened near evening; and on the negro's arrival at the serey', in a state of the greatest excitement, he related the whole affair to me. It seemed to us both much too serious for concealment; and we determined that either he or I should next morning tell the Pasha. Unhappily, before the morning broke there was no need to tell, and no Pasha to tell it to.

“According to the order established in the household, my customary resting-place for the night was on a carpet spread in the ante-room, whence a door opened into the Pasha's own private apartment: that, namely, which

he occupied when he slept out of the haram, as it was his practice to do twice, thrice, or even oftener in the week. The Croatian, Ghalib (whom our master trusted more thoroughly, I think, than he did any one else, even myself), used to lie on the floor within the Pasha's sleeping-room itself, just across the entrance on the inside, his dagger and pistols arranged under the pillow at his head. There was no other door leading into the room; but the windows on one side opened out upon a gallery running round the interior of the centre-court, and were often only half-closed, particularly during the hot season of the year,—a fatal circumstance as it proved. Sa'eed's night quarters were with the other negroes and guardsmen,—near the great gate of the court-yard, whence a broad flight of low steps led up to the first floor."

“I thought you had all moved down into the underground vaults,” said Ṭanṭawee. “You spoke of your having put them in order for the summer.”

“They are only for use in the day-time,” answered Hermann; “at night, the open air, or at any rate the upper storeys, are the only tolerable resting-places in the climate of Bagdad. However great the heat may have been from sunrise to sunset, the hours of darkness seldom fail to bring on a refreshing change, and the free air is then a thing to be sought, not to be avoided. The upstairs rooms of our serey’ were spacious; and though liable to be overheated by the glare of a summer sun, soon cooled down after evening, and became very pleasant; hence my master generally preferred remaining in them from the night prayers¹ till morning.

¹ Nearly two hours after sunset.

The haram formed a distinct wing of the building, and Kara - Mustapha - Oghloo, who set little store by feminine society, was a comparatively scant visitor there."

"Enough," answered Tanṭawee. "I understand it all now; so pray continue your story."

Hermann resumed.

"That night (it was dark and cloudy, an unusual thing for the time of year), the Pasha, who had been detained on business till late, and was tired out by the occupations of a more than ordinarily wearisome day, chose to take his rest not in the haram, but in his own apartment. I followed him, and assisted him as usual in undressing and preparing for sleep. I then left him for a moment, and returned, bringing the jug of rose-flavoured water which always stood close at his bedside for him to drink from if he felt thirsty during the night.

“‘Ahmed,’ said he, looking up, ‘you are a good youth, and have served me well and faithfully from the day I first took you. I will give you your liberty, please God, at the Lesser Beyram;¹ and you shall then take duty as my Khaznehdar, for I can trust you. What do you say to it?’

“I kissed his hand in answer, and wished him long life.

“Suddenly he started. ‘Did you hear that?’ he exclaimed, sitting right up, and turning very pale.

“‘What?’ said I.

“‘Listen!’

“Dead silence reigned within the room and

¹ The festival immediately following on the yearly Ramadan fast. This must have been then exactly two months distant; for I find that the Pasha’s death took place on the night of the first of Sha’aban, the month preceding Ramadan, in the year of the story.

without; an occasional gust of wind sighing against the windows was all I heard.

“The Pasha drew a deep breath; then repeated to himself, half-aloud, the customary verses of the Kōran.¹

“‘There was nothing,’ I remarked; ‘it was only the noise of the wind. God turn it to good.’

“‘To good,’ he repeated; then called Ghalib, and bade him fetch fresh water. When it had been brought, he made his ablutions and said his prayers, at which he remained longer than usual.

“But hardly had he completed the second salutation at their close, than again he started, looked round, and listened.

“‘The summoner!’² he said in a low voice;

¹ These are contained in the two last chapters of the Kōran, and are recited to avert impending evil.

² The “hatif” or banshee of the Arabs.

‘the summoner of our family.’ And then to Ghalib and myself, ‘Did you not hear it?’

“We both answered in the negative. The wind had now dropped; all around the house was utterly still. A shiver came over me.

“‘I take refuge with God,’ said the Pasha; and added, ‘Be near to-night, both of you. Ghalib, take care that the doors of the outer room are safely closed; but first give the men at the lower entrance notice that some of them should remain on the look-out till morning. You, too, Aḥmed Agha, before lying down, go all round the serey’, and see that every one is in his place.’

“We promised to do so, and he seemed, after giving these orders, to regain his ordinary quiet of mind; but as I left the room, I heard a deep sigh. I visited the rooms and galleries; there was nothing in them to excite suspicion: silence and darkness reigned

everywhere. I then shook off the vague feeling of dread that had been creeping over me, and went to sleep.

“It must have been somewhat after midnight when I was wakened up by a hand, a cool moist hand, laid on my arm. I looked up by the light of a candle left burning in the room; it was Sa’eed stood over me.

“‘What now?’ said I, surprised.

“‘A horrible dream,’ answered Sa’eed, who was trembling all over. ‘I have just seen *him*. God’s curse on him!’

“‘Whom?’ I answered, almost inclined to laugh at the excessive alarm in his manner.

“‘*Him!*’ replied Sa’eed; ‘the Evil One. He was exactly as when I first saw him in my own country, the night before they attacked our village: he was standing up to his knees in blood; his face was smeared with it; and there were red horns on his head.’

“‘Donkey of a negro!’ said I; ‘is that all you have wakened me about?’ and went on bantering him as best I could about his dream; but in an undertone, for fear of disturbing the Pasha in the next room.

“But Sa’eed was thoroughly frightened, and continued to repeat, now phrases of anti-dia-bolical efficacy, I suppose, in his own Darfooree language, now scraps of the Kōran. I felt very uncomfortable myself, and wished the night over. Sa’eed begged and prayed me to let him remain close by me till morning. ‘We had better watch,’ he said. I consented, and we sat together talking in a low voice (I, on my part, feigning an easy security which I was in reality far from enjoying), for an hour or so.

“What next startled us both was a deep-drawn, half-snorting, half-gurgling noise from the Pasha’s apartment on the other side. We

remained silent, and listened. The noise continued a short while, then lessened, then ceased altogether. Dead stillness followed.

“‘What can that be?’ said I to Sa’eed, who was now sitting up, his mouth open, his eyes staring and fixed as if moonstruck. While I was yet speaking, the door was gently pushed aside from within a little, then a little more; the light of the candle placed on a chest in my sleeping-room struck through the opening. I could not see in from where I sat, but Sa’eed could. He sprang up with a horrible yell, and dashed the door wide back, throwing the person who stood behind it violently to the ground. I followed.

“By the dull glimmer of a lamp on the floor I could indistinctly see Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo-Pasha lying in his night-dress on the couch where I had so lately left him, as if asleep; but his head seemed strangely thrown

back, and there was a broad streak of something dark and shining from the bed to and along the ground. It was blood, still flowing. The Croatian lay, not on his carpet, but at a little distance on one side of it; his knees were drawn up, and his hands spread out, but motionless.

“The Greeks, Yoosuf and Dimitri, were in the room; so also was Hoseyn, a tall, strong-built Koorde, one of the Pasha's own suite, and a bosom friend, as every one knew, of Manşoor the Syrian. Yoosuf had been knocked down by the sudden opening of the door; the other two were standing between the divan and the bed on which the Pasha was stretched out. The three murderers had nothing on them except their under linen dress, stoutly girded; but each one had about him a couple of knives,—crooked knives and sharp, ready for further use if requisite.

“I, too, had, by good luck, my yataghan with me. I had stuck it into my belt while sitting up with Sa’eed; he, for his part, was armed with a short two-edged *kama*.¹ Drawing this he fell, rather than leapt, upon the still prostrate Yoosuf, and began stabbing him in every direction. The Greek, taken utterly by surprise, made no effort at resistance, but gasped under the blows. The Koorde observing me, rushed at me, a knife in each hand. I caught up the cushion that a few minutes before had pillowed poor Ghalib’s head, and with it struck my adversary full on the breast and face; he cast his arms up, and, at the same instant, I ran him through and through with my yataghan.

“Meanwhile a deadly struggle was going on between Sa’eed and Dimitri, now the sole

¹ A broad-bladed dagger, often worn by Turks.

surviving Greek, for Yoosuf already lay stone-dead. Dimitri cut Sa'eed deep in the arm and thigh ; while Sa'eed, whose dagger had dropped on the floor, grappled with the enemy, and fixing his sharp white teeth in his throat, flung him about as a stag-hound would a deer he was worrying, receiving all the time fresh but random slashes. Free of the Koorde, I now came up to my companion's help ; and seizing the Greek's left arm from behind, struck my knife in home under his ribs ; he groaned, and would have fallen to the ground, but the negro's teeth kept him up. Sa'eed had torn open the veins of his throat, and was literally sucking his blood.

“ ‘ Let go,’ said I, ‘ he is dead.’ ”

“ ‘ Sa'eed obeyed, grinding his teeth, and drawing in his breath with a sound between a hiss and a moan ; his face was frightful

to look on, it was that of a wild beast. The corpse of the Greek dropped on the floor ; he kicked it with his foot.

“‘Come,’ said I, ‘and let us see how it has gone with our master.’

“Sa’eed gave a start, and with a wild scared look accompanied me to the bedside. We trimmed the lamp, the same which the murderers, no doubt, had lighted for completing their evil purpose ; it showed us nothing but death. The Pasha’s throat had been cut right through ; he must have died instantaneously. The Croatian’s neck was bruised, and the spine broken. Of the three assassins two had already breathed their last ; the third, it was the Koorde Hoseyn, still groaned a little. The negro put his foot on the dying man’s breast, and stamped till all was over.

“‘They have not been quite quick enough

for us,' said he. 'They would have killed us too,—you at all events, and reported robbers, or God knows what. The swine,—curse their fathers!—would have had a famous reward from 'Alee-Riza and his friends, and have been themselves made away with also soon after,—no,—that dog Yoosuf at least would have been too sharp for his employers. The fellow meant to have been far enough away from Bagdad before dawn ;—look here !' and he pulled out a quantity of gold coin, seals, and jewellery from the blood-stained pockets of the dead Greek's linen trousers.

“ Then suddenly throwing himself all along on the Pasha's corpse, and kissing the dead hand as though he would have devoured it, 'O my master!' he sobbed; 'O loss! O misery! O God,—misery!'

“ I could bear up no longer; the excitement of the struggle, and all the savage feelings

that had accompanied it, revenge, hatred, self-defence, fury, were now passing away fast as the passing moments. I gazed on the death-pale face of Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo,—he had been throughout a kind and liberal master and patron to me; at the distorted and swollen features of Ghalib the Croatian,—he had been my earliest companion in my captivity, and a steady affectionate friend; and sitting down by the dead body of my poor comrade on the floor, I burst into an agony of grief.

“Sa’eed looked up. ‘What are you after crying there?’ he said. ‘Up; take some of this along with you,’ tossing me a handful of the plunder of the helpless Greek; ‘up, and be off, and far away hence before daylight, or you are a lost man. You will be made answerable for all this; and impalement is the very least that the *kaḍee* and ‘Alee-Riza between them, will adjudge you to.’

“What he said was the truth ; there was no doubting that it would be even so. ‘But you, Sa’eed,’ I answered, ‘are you not coming too ? Up, and along ; we shall live to take more revenge for our master yet.’

“‘I have done, and am done for,’ was his reply, as he pointed to his side, from which the blood was running fast and thick ; another stream, bright red on the black skin, trickled by jets down his arm from the shoulder to the elbow.

“‘I cannot leave you thus, my brother,’ said I. ‘Let me tie it up ; we can then go on together, and I will take care of you by the way till we reach some quiet hiding-place not far off. Come along.’

“‘No, Aḥmed Agha,’ he answered ; ‘the time for all that is gone by. If I were to try and accompany you, it would not save me,—it would only put you in danger of being caught.

Go, my brother ; go in God's guard, and leave me alone. I will join my master.'

" Thus saying, he settled himself down, all bleeding as he was, at the foot of the bed, and leant his head against the knees of the corpse on it. I tried to rouse him,—he was panting quick and hard. As I touched him he shrank away impatiently, and buried his face in the bed-covering. Soon his breathing slackened and stopped. Gently I took his hand : it was icy cold, the fingers closed firm on mine ; he looked up at me, a look of strange tenderness, pitifully earnest, and smiled. An instant after, his eyeballs rolled inwards and upwards,—his hand stiffened in my hold,—he was dead."

Hermann was silent a minute.

" I have often heard," said Tāntawee, " that negroes have a secret for dying at will ; curious fellows, those blacks. May God have mercy on him."

Hermann repeated the phrase with much feeling, but added nothing; he seemed far away in thought.

“How lonely you must have felt, poor boy!” continued Tāntawee, wishing to rouse him from his reverie. “I can fancy your dreariness when all was over, and you were left alone, with only the dead around you. Did you ever hear what happened next day, and what became of the corpses?”

Hermann roused himself.

“When next I visited Bagdad, almost three years later, I found that the Pasha, —God have mercy on him!—had received honourable and costly sepulture amid the tombs of his family close by the Mosque of the Şaliḥeeyah, in the Koordish quarter of the city; an open cupola had been erected over his grave, which was popularly revered as that of a martyr: for no one of the towns-

people doubted that infidels,—that is the two Greeks,—had done the deed. Their corpses had been gibbeted for a few days, then taken down and thrown into the river. Hoseyn, who came in for the benefit of the doubt whether he had not, perhaps, met his fate in defending his master, and Sa'eed, had been buried, but apart from each other; the former in the Koordish cemetery, the latter in the great general burying-ground outside the city walls, on the south side.

“No stone marked the spot where my poor negro friend was laid; but it was pointed out to me by some townsmen, who, in accordance with the common belief, called Sa'eed, like his master, ‘martyr,’ and spoke of the murder with the fresh horror of a recent occurrence. When alone afterwards, I often went there,—you may wonder,—but I had reasons for doing so which I cannot tell even

to you. Take in exchange the verses of my lament ; I recited them over the grave.

“When the waning moon is high,
And the dawn is on her track,
And the cypress shadows black
On the turbaned tombstones lie ;
And the sudden call is loud
That the faithful bids to prayer,
Thou shalt stir thee in thy shroud,
Wakeful mid the slumbers there.

“Thou wast faithful in thy life ;
Thou wast faithful in thy end ;
Faithful follower, faithful friend,
Faithful found in rest and strife.
Ever ready to my call,
Ever present at my side ;
Now thou com'st not,—silent all ;
Is the severing gulf so wide ?

“God of faithful hearts and brave,
God of loving hearts and true,
Fresher than the morning dew
Be thy mercies on that grave.
Be thy mercies on the head
That was bowed to none but Thee ;
Be thy mercies on the dead,
Yet not wholly dead to me.”

“Why, our celebrated poetess, Tomadir

the Khansa,¹ herself, could hardly have lamented *Sakhr* more feelingly; you deserve a place among the bards of the 'Ḥamaṣah,'"² said Ṭanṭawee. "Not that I quite follow the meaning of your last line."

This was spoken inquiringly; but Hermann's face gave no promise of explanation, or even of answer. Ṭanṭawee saw it, and changed the subject.

"And what," added he, "was the current idea in Bagdad regarding the assassination itself? to whose instigation was it ascribed? I know thus much only, that neither 'Alee-Riza Effendee nor any of his faction profited by it."

¹ A pre-Islamite authoress of note; her verses of mourning over her brother *Sakhr*, who died of wounds received in battle, have come down to us, and are ranked among the best elegies of Arab literature.

² The classical "Golden Treasury" of Arab poetry; it was compiled by Abou Temman, himself a poet of the first order, about 820 A.C.

“ They certainly did not,” replied Hermann. “ The investigation, I was told, was secret ; but measures accompanied it, or followed, which proved that the mystery did not remain uncleared in the councils of Constantinople at least. Such were the sudden and total disappearance of 'Alee-Riza ; the disgrace and downfall of the too-powerful *kaḍee* ; and the appointment of the stern and despotic *Tahir Kūbrooslee Pasha*, formerly an intimate friend of *Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo's*, to the government of the province.

“ In Bagdad itself,” he continued, “ no one ventured to speak openly, even then ; but public opinion, though whispered only, hit the mark, or very near it. I indeed thought it prudent, during my short stay, to avoid personal recognition,—no difficult business, so changed was I in look and bearing from the comely light-hearted lad of scarce three years before ; but

if I had instead openly announced myself for who I was in the mid-market place, there would have been, I believe, no real risk in so doing."

"It is wonderful," remarked Tanṭawee, musingly, and speaking rather to himself than to his friend, "how those dogs of Osmanlees contrive to become acquainted,—usually a little after time, it is true,—with whatever occurs throughout the vast straggling empire; and how, sitting still themselves, and seeming to take no notice, they get into their fat hands the strings of every intrigue, from the Danube to the Tigris, and pull them to their own advantage. God knows best, but I almost fear they may in the end prove too much even for us. But now," he said, addressing himself directly to Hermann, "pray resume your story, and tell me how you got off safe." The other continued,—

“ After a few paralysed minutes of intense depression and horror, I awoke to my own immediate and personal danger. What Sa’eed, poor fellow, had said, I knew to be strictly correct ; if I was found within Bagdad next morning, there was nothing for me but torture and death. I must make haste.

“ Turning my attention first to the corpses of the Pasha, the negro, and the Croatian, I arranged and covered them as decently as I could, but without altering their respective positions ; thus, I thought, they would best tell their own story. Next I took one of the Koorde Hoseyn’s knives,—they were sharper than my dagger,—and with it severed the heads of the three murderers, putting each head between its owner’s feet, where they lay in blood on the floor—the curse of God on them all. This done, I crammed some loose coin into my pockets, threw the jewellery on

the Greek Yoosuf's treacherous face, and made for the door ; whence however, I turned again to kiss the hands of my late master, and of my faithful friend Sa'eed once more, and to put out the light.

“From the chamber of death, through the ante-room, along the passage, down the dark steps, I felt my way, till the cool night air blew on me from the open, and I stood in the courtyard. Everywhere around in the serey' was silence ; the mortal struggle, too fierce in its short duration for shout or cry, had given no alarm. Sa'eed's unrepeatd yell of horror, if heard, had passed unnoticed.

“My first thought now was to try and get one of the Pasha's horses out of the stable, but the grooms were sleeping there ; and the fear lest the animal should neigh and wake them up prevented me ; besides, how could I contrive to open the large folding doors of the

palace and pass the guards there, unnoticed ? So I abandoned that scheme, and began looking about for a place in the walls where I could conveniently climb over. This I was lucky enough soon to find ; in a couple of minutes more I had dropped noiselessly into a narrow lane behind the building.

“ Without once turning to bid farewell to the home thus left, I passed down the alley, carefully looking around, but seeing no one except the silent stars above me, till I came full on the river. The deep stream was flowing calmly and rapidly by in all its mighty life, —the great life in which we all share, and which takes no heed of our coming or of our going ; a few dim lights glimmered on the far-off opposite shore ; some black boats lay moored in darkness close under the bank, but there was no one in them keeping watch ; the very town-dogs were fast asleep curled up in the dust ;

it was the stillest hour of the night, that which immediately precedes the dawn. Quietly as might be, I went on till I reached the point where the city walls and towers come sheer down upon the water. In I plunged, swam with the current round the corner, and a good hundred yards lower down the stream; until, taking advantage of a grassy slope at the edge, I managed to scramble out, and found myself in a field somewhat to the south of the town, on the east side of the Tigris.

“To what particular point of the compass I should next turn was a consideration for which I had no leisure as yet; all I thought of was how to get away, and that the quickest and the farthest possible, in any direction. Looking round by the grey light of early morning, now spreading over river and plain, I distinguished a dark heap,—it was the night-encampment of some travellers, I know

not who, sleeping on the ground not far off; probably they had arrived the evening before, too late for admittance within the gates. Most of their horses were picketed close by them, but two stood at a tempting distance from their owners, behind the baggage.

“One of these I resolved to appropriate for my own use. So I crept cautiously up; the men were sound asleep, and their heads hid beneath the cloaks which covered them all over from the night air. Gently,—for my life was at stake,—I drew away a saddle and bridle from out the heap of travelling-gear to which these articles belonged, and carried them to the farthest horse,—a light bay. I stroked the beast, breathed up his nostrils, put some grass to his mouth to keep him occupied; next placed the saddle on his back, and fastened the girths; slipped the bridle over his head, and the bit into his mouth;

then cautiously undoing the foot-ropes, led him a little way on one side, preparatory to mounting him, when, to my intense disgust, the brute gave a long whinnying neigh. It was answered by a whole chorus of the other quadrupeds where they stood by their owners, as if on purpose to arouse the slumberers, and ‘stop thief.’ But the alarm-signal had been deferred till too late; that very instant I had leapt into the saddle, and was off into the uncertain twilight, just in time to elude the pursuit which my now awakened friends hurriedly prepared to make after me. ‘A lucky hit,’ thought I, as off I galloped, ‘somebody will have to get a new horse to-day, but it shall not be from me.’

“Away I went, by plain and palm-grove, taking no heed whither my course led, except to keep well clear of the town-walls, and of the many villages in their neighbourhood.

As the bright sun flashed upon the horizon, I drew bridle for a moment, and looked round ; far off glittered the gilt domes of the Kāzim mosque ;¹ and smaller yet, because in remoter distance, the cupola of the Gheelanee,² several miles to the south-west. I had, without intending it, taken the direction of Kerkook.

“ What, meantime, became of my pursuers, and of the rightful owner of the horse I bestrode, I never ascertained ; probably they missed my track from the very first. Anyhow, there was no one in sight but a stray peasant here and there, come out to his morning work, and the trooping birds that flew over or settled on the parched fields. I

¹ A celebrated sanctuary of the Shee'ah, or Persianizing sect, at Bagdad. It is built over the tomb of one of their twelve Imams.

² A mosque, bearing the name of the famous 'Abd-el-Kādir el Gheelanee, a well-known saint of Mahometan hagiology.

was acquainted with this part of the country, having traversed it more than once on my late master's errands to the neighbourhood; and I had then remarked a large and deep-cut canal, which I now guessed to be not far off. This I sought for; and, having discovered it, I next rode along it, hoping to find a convenient spot where I could conceal myself close to its banks. At last, I came on a large shell-like hollow,—down into which I led my horse, tethered him, and then took a thorough survey of my person and dress. The first view reassured me somewhat: I was much less besmeared with blood than I had imagined in the dark.

“Taking off my clothes I walked knee-deep into the water, washed myself all over, and then scrubbed hard at the streaks and stains on my apparel and accoutrements. The marks would not come out altogether,—if

ever you try, you will find how hard blood is to get rid of,—but, at all events, they took a different and less damning appearance ; especially when, after a thorough soaking and rinsing, I rubbed a considerable quantity of the brown canal-dust into every part of my dress. Then I sat down again by the side of my horse, and drew out my gold pieces with a heavy sigh, remembering how they had come into my possession ; I counted them,—they were eighty-seven in all. These things over, I tried forcibly to drive away the black swarm of thoughts which, like the mosquitoes of the canal, were ever ready to settle on me the first instant of leisure, and applied my whole mind to consider what I had best do next, and whither go.

“North?—that it must be. It was, though at an immense distance, the way to my own home ; and it was also,—which I allow

was a much more urgent motive to my mind now quite unhinged from that old home by the many events and violent changes that had occurred since I left it,—the way to Diar-Bekr, to the home of Zahra'! At that name life returned, and for half a second I felt as though I could be almost glad at the result of a night which had put me so suddenly on the way back to her, just when I was beginning to lose all hope of a second meeting. But reflection made me immediately ashamed of so egotistical a feeling, and I denied it to myself; wishing on the contrary, expressly and deliberately, that I had been, not on the road Diar-Bekrwards, safe and sound, but lying dead in the inner chamber of the serey', alongside of my good negro friend, and my noble trusting master.

“Having reiterated this wish two or three times to make sure of it,”—

“You were very glad all the same,” interposed Tāntawee, “that it was not so; and had there been the slightest possibility of such an exchange, you would hardly have wished it so freely.”

“No, not so,” rejoined Hermann; “I was quite sincere; I wished it with all my heart then and there,—I know I did.” He continued,—

“Rising, I led my horse up the bank again out of the hollow, crossed a small bridge, and put the canal between myself and Bagdad, now lost from view.

“Diar-Bekr was, then, to be my goal; but by what route? Three things were evident; first, that I must lose no time in getting clear of the risk of being caught and led back; secondly, that I must shape my way so as to include the necessary opportunities for obtaining food and shelter; thirdly, that I could

not venture to show either myself, my clothes, or my horse, in any village too near Bagdad. The alarm might have already spread to a distance, or, if not, it was sure soon to be so; and my appearance and recognition might lead either to immediate arrest, or lend a clue to subsequent inquiry and following up. On the other hand, though a stranger-born, I was by this sufficiently acquainted with the narrow range of localization in the East to know that if once at a reasonable distance from the scene of action, I was comparatively secure from being involved in its consequences; and that if once clear of the limits of the Pashalik itself, I had little or nothing to fear.

“The result was, that, instead of retracing the direct road to Kerkook, that by which I had come the year before, I struck out more to the east, and made my way for three

weeks of incessant riding and roughing it through a broken and thinly-peopled country. Most often I journeyed by night, for the heat of the sun was intense, and I ill able to bear it, wearied out as I was by excitement and privations ; my days I passed where and how I could. Many were the vicissitudes of hospitality and of churlishness that I experienced among the villagers, peasants, and shepherds ; frequently hungry, sometimes in danger ; for the population hereabouts is scant and lawless ; every man carries arms, and uses them as he thinks fit. At last I arrived on the banks of the Zab, at the so-called Kanjar ford, considerably above the spot where I had so gaily dashed across the torrent before Pasha and comrades a twelvemonth since.

“After many attempts and failures I traversed the furious rush of waters, and set my face for Moşool, three days’ distance, as some

shepherds who were driving their flocks to drink at a reach on the northern bank, informed me. Far away from Bagdad, beyond the utmost limit of its jurisdiction, I now felt tolerably safe ; and while slowly measuring out the three days of road that the weariness alike of horse and rider protracted to four, I had ample leisure to reflect on the utter loneliness of my actual condition in the world.

“ Lonely indeed. True, I was no longer a prisoner or a slave ; but so long as I had been one or the other, I had, at all events, some one to hold by, some one who had an interest in me ; now there was no one. I was my own master, but in a strange land ; among men and languages still in a measure strange ; no friend, no adviser, no companion, no stay,—strangers all. Zahra’ herself, her lovely face, her gentle voice, her sweet converse, with whatever had occurred at Diar-

Bekr, the garden, the terrace, the house, the place of meeting, the whole episode, seemed to me to fade somehow into a dream, and that all the more as I approached my one haven of hope. I could not get myself to think steadily that it had been, and might still be, a reality.

“ In vain I strove to recall it. That place, the place of reality, was now occupied in my mind by Bagdad,—by its streets, its market, its gardens, by the palace, by my kind master the Pasha, by my cheery friend the negro, by my staunch ally the Croatian ; again and again the horrible death-scene came before me, or, rather, it was never absent. I saw the faces I had known and loved, now ghastly and disfigured as when the lamp gleamed on them in that fatal room ; now, but as if through a haze or mask, bearing their old wonted appearance ; at times I could not per-

suade myself but that one or other of them was actually near me, so real they seemed.

“The country around me, too,—do you know it?—no; you were never there yourself,—increased the sense of desolation; dull slabby rocks, bare slopes, dry chalk hill-sides, and, over all, a monotonous cloudless sky, in which the very sun appeared to stand still for heaviness; now and then some broken wall of an old abandoned fortress, telling no history in its unmeaning fragments, except that of decay and ruin,—”

“For God’s sake, my good fellow, get out of this,” answered Tāṇṭawee; “my hair is growing grey to hear you; your account is more dreary than the croak of the unluckiest raven.”

“What must the thing itself have been to me who went through it all?” said Hermann; then continued,—

“ But youth and health were mine yet, and they do wonders. I felt, even in my most melancholy moments, an elasticity, as it were, that nothing could crash, and a determination to go through or tread down whatever difficulties might cross my way.

“ Thus I rode on; till after coming out from among the huge earth-heaps,—what heaps are they?—one would say that some vast city must lie buried underneath them,—on the eastern bank of the Tigris. I saw the river itself, the rock of Nebee Yoonas,¹ and the town of Moşool before me, though still at a considerable distance.

“ The sight dissipated my day-dreams, bright and gloomy alike, and aroused me to the

¹ A large isolated rock on the left shore of the Tigris, opposite Moşool; the prophet Jonas is supposed to have taken up his station here when announcing the destruction of Nineveh.

realities and cares of actual life. Dismounting from my horse, I bestowed a general survey on my person and weapons, furbished up with earth the silver mountings of the latter, rearranged the saddle and other accoutrements, and counted over again my diminished stock of wealth. Then taking advantage of a clear brook that was hastening close by over the pebbles to join the great river of the plain, I performed my long-neglected ablutions, and said my prayers, with late and almost penitent gratitude to the God who had brought me safe and sound thus far through so many dangers, and with increased hope and trust in Him for the future. This duty performed, I remounted, and began to traverse at a foot-pace the wide stony level that marks the old water-bed, and out of which rises the strange isolated rock of Nebee Yoonas, like a giant watch-tower over river and town.

“It was the Friday of the last week in Sha’aban,¹ a festive season, and, besides, a day of commemoration in honour of I know not what Welee,² in the suburbs of the town. On my way alongside of the huge rock, and down the gradual slope to the river, I fell in with group after group of citizens, gaily dressed in their best clothes ; some were on horseback, some on foot, and all equally bent on enjoying to the utmost a daylight holiday, before the approaching month of Ramaḍan, should limit the pleasures of existence to the short summer nights.³

¹ The month which immediately precedes the fast of Ramaḍan ; hence it assumes something of a carnival character, particularly towards the end. Friday, among Mahometans, takes the place of Sunday among Christians.

² Saint.

³ During that month, all eating, drinking, smoking, and every kind of pleasure and amusement is prohibited from the first streak of dawn till after sunset.

“Noon had passed, but the sun was yet high in the bright west; and the river with its broad marginal tract of stones and gravel glittered before me in dazzling light; the very mud walls of Moşool looked golden in the gleam. For myself, I was growing hungry, having tasted no food since a platter of sour clotted milk shared with a shepherd that morning among the now far-off hills. Instinctively I looked hard at every one I met, in the vague idea of recognising a friend or acquaintance; while I also thought in what khan of the town I had best put up, should nobody claim me as a subject for the hospitality of which my horse, poor jaded brute, so unceremoniously pressed into hard service, stood scarcely less in need than myself.

“Just as I reached the water, and halted hesitating on its edge, a large flat-bottomed boat crossed over from the town-side to the

place where I had drawn rein, and half a dozen Koordes, well dressed, and armed in full travelling equipment, stepped out on the stones. I looked at them; they looked at me.

“‘Ahmed Agha! is it you?’ said one of them; while another exclaimed, ‘By God! it is he.’ All eyes were now on me; and after a short effort of memory, I recognised in the first speaker, one Maḵan Agha, a horseman in the service of Aḵ-Arslan Beg, governor of the town of Jezeerah, half-way between Moṣool and Diar-Bekr. Our acquaintance dated from a day’s halt that my old master the Pasha had made in that place when on his ill-starred journey to Bagdad; and had been a very hearty one on both sides, though based only on a casual meeting in a pleasant little ḵaḥwah near the river, and cemented with nothing firmer than the smoke of a

nargheelah, a cup or two of indifferent coffee, and a glass of yet more indifferent raķee.

“ But Maķan Agha was a sociable fellow, bright and cheerful, with a keen black eye, quick to observe, coarse but handsome features, and a friendly expression of face which corresponded with his good-hearted disposition. Thus, though a year had elapsed since our first and only meeting, he knew me again at once, and hastened to welcome me. I need hardly say how glad I was to feel the hand of a friend in mine once more. His five comrades, who all belonged to the same service as himself, were unremembered by me, that is, distinctly, though I was not so by them ; a circumstance ordinary with strangers in all countries.

“ ‘ And what brings you here alone ? ’ continued Maķan Agha, with a queer side-glance at my dress, and another at my drooping

horse, after the preliminary stereotyped greetings, salutations, and inquiries had been duly interchanged between us.

“‘The chances of the times,’ answered I, unwilling to enter there and then into what, I thought, might yet be the dangerous details of adventure and escape. ‘And you, where are you bound for?’ I added.

“‘For Jezeerah,’ he replied; ‘one and all of us. The Beg wishes to be there before the beginning of Ramadān; we shall get to Zakoo¹ to-morrow, and the day after be, please God, at home.’

“‘And where is the Beg?’

“‘Coming as soon as he has done taking leave of his friends. Look! there he is.’

“I turned in the direction indicated, and saw, on the farther side of the river, a group

¹ A large village, more than half way from Moşool to Jezeerah.

of caparisoned horses in the act of being led down by grooms to the bank. Near them, but on foot, were several persons, seemingly of rank and wealth, slowly moving onward in close conversation, to the water, where a boat was in waiting. When they had reached it, they remained a short time standing gathered together; then followed a great deal of embracing and other demonstrations of respectful and affectionate leave-taking. At last the Beg, for it was he, stepped, with a few attendants, into the boat, and seated himself gravely on the carpet spread for him at the stern; the horses were meanwhile being part coaxed, part forced, into a clumsy barge some yards distant.

“With no formed purport in my mind, but merely as a looker-on, I loitered among my newly-found acquaintance, till the Beg and his servants arrived at our side of the water,

and prepared to quit the boat. I then drew off on one side, and waited till the barge, which was now also near, should have discharged its restless freight, and be ready to convey my horse and myself over to the town.

“But Mağan Agha stepped up to the Beg his chief, and whispered something to him. Having received an answer in the same undertone, he next approached me, and said, ‘Ahmed, brother, he calls you.’

“On the summons I came forward, leading my drooping beast by the bridle, and saluted Ak-Arslan with the respect due to his birth and importance. My famished way-worn appearance, ungroomed horse, and scanty belongings, must have presented a curious contrast to the well-dressed, well-fed, well-mounted figures that crowded inquisitively about me.

“The Beg fixed his look attentively on me,

while he returned my salutation with marked but patronizing kindness of manner. He was a small, clean-built man, dark haired, and dark complexioned, bearing a general resemblance to a handsome hawk; his age could not have much exceeded thirty; and his features would have been good-looking, had not frequent exposure to sun and wind, with hard work, mental no less than bodily, drawn and wrinkled them into a certain harshness of line. His eye too was restless, and its glance furtive. He was evidently what is called a dangerous man; yet one whom his followers might, on the whole, like, and still more, perhaps, obey. Such was my impression of him at first sight.

“‘No need, Agha, to tell your story,’ said he. ‘I had heard before that you were missing on the morning after that night from the palace; and I guessed that you had managed to get safe off,—how, we will hear

from you afterwards at leisure. May God have mercy on Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo. I anticipated long since that some snare or other was being set for him, and gave him a hint or two on the subject when he came through Jezeerah last year. I had then my especial doubts about the Greeks in his company; one of them was, I know, a pick-up of that hypocrite Eyas-Beg,—may God curse him and them! But, to what purpose?—when what has been predestined approaches, the eyesight becomes blind; no man can escape from that which has been written. And you?’ he continued, in a brisker tone of voice,—‘where are you going next? or have you any friends whom you are looking after here?’

“‘None,’ I answered; ‘God grant the Beg a long life. I am travelling where God may direct; perhaps a way may open some-

where.' And with difficulty I smothered a sigh as I thought of Zahra'. But I could not help the downcast expression of my face, and the Beg remarked it.

" 'Assuredly after difficulty comes relief,'¹ said he. 'Better come along with me; God is generous. I will see to all you want when we reach Jezeerah.'

"These words were spoken with genuine kindness, yet with a certain air of authority too, as by one accustomed to be obeyed. Hesitation on my part would have been mere folly. I thankfully embraced the invitation, leaving its conditions to be settled afterwards. Besides, would it not anyhow bring me nearer to Diar Bekr?

"By the Beg's order I was on the spot provided with a fresher horse, and took my place

¹ A quotation from the Koran.

among the riders in his suite. The animal that had served me so well I handed over to Maḵan Agha, who sold it at the first village we reached—at what price I never asked.

“We went briskly forwards,—a compact band,—by the hilly, grass-grown tract that borders the left bank of the Tigris. That night we halted at a small village,—Tell-Keyf, I think, by name; the second afternoon brought us to Zakoo, a pretty little town and market-place, close by the rapid Khaboor;¹ the river-ford delayed us somewhat, and we did not reach Jezeerah till the third night-fall.

“During the march the Beg often called me up to his side, and asked me many questions concerning my life at Bagdad, and my escape thence; more often his inquiries

¹ A river that joins the Tigris hereabouts from the east.

regarded my former master, his government, his conduct, the intrigues formed against him, and the circumstances of his violent death. My answers must have pleased him; for, when I had finished, he said,—

“‘Ahmed, I might fairly claim you as a slave, for such, indeed, you yet are by condition, but I will not do so. You are a fine youth, and I do not doubt that Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo,—may God have mercy on him!—really intended to have given you your freedom. It is only just that I should comply with his wishes,—may it be put to the account of his good deeds, not of mine. When we arrive, please God, at Jezeerah, I will have your certificate-paper of emancipation made out in full, and you shall become one of my horsemen. Are you content?’ I kissed his hand, and thanked him. ‘Thank God, not me,’ he replied.

“ Good fortune, like bad, has a habit of coming double or triple. On the very day,—it was the second after leaving Moşool,—that Ak-Arslan gave me a near and assured hope of becoming a free man, I made an acquisition, pleasant indeed at the time, but the full value of which I was only to know later on.

“ It was the friendship of a youth, a mere lad in age, an Arab of the Benoo-Riaḥ clan, whom I met in the principal kaḥwah of the village of Zakoo, where we had halted for the night. The lad, Moḥarib by name, had left his companions in the pasture-grounds below Moşool, and had come thus far in quest of some sheep, strayed a month before, and not yet accounted for. With a daring and intelligence beyond his years, though not rarely found among young Bedouins, he had penetrated alone and unaided to Zakoo ;

had there discovered part of the objects of his search ; and was, when we fell in with him, engaged in hot dispute with two huge Koordes, whom he accused of keeping back the remainder.

“The lad’s handsome features, the active energy displayed in every lithe limb of his spare frame, but above all, his self-possessed, undaunted air, and coal-black eye that sparkled with fire, attracted my notice ; and my double knowledge of Turkish and of Arabic enabled me to take his part with such good effect, that a satisfactory equivalent for the missing animals was at length offered and accepted.

“This incident led, as was natural, to further conversation between us ; he told me his own name, descent, and the circumstances of his clan. I, on my side, recounted my story and adventures, without, however, as I thought,

giving, by what I said, any clue to the secret of my soul at Diar-Bekr, a secret thus far kept by me from all others; yet the pleasure I experienced in talking Arabic for the first time since I had left Bagdad, and the very copiousness of that language where feeling is concerned, betrayed me, as I subsequently reflected, into certain words and phrases that might, to one who was on the look-out for it, afford a general insight into my real state of mind. However, I did not then think that I had done so, and Moharib, after listening with great attention, and even asking a few questions, the purport of which I could not entirely follow, made no direct allusion to my unguarded expressions. Only, when all had been said, he manifested for me a degree of interest and attachment scarcely, to my mind, justified by the easy service that I had rendered him an hour before. He would devote

himself, body and soul, to the furtherance of my wishes; he would stand by me in every danger; he would be my follower, my companion, my brother; in fine, he gave me no rest till I had consented to go through with him that very evening the ceremony of 'Khoo'wat,'¹ according to the custom of his tribe.

"More from curiosity than from any other motive I consented. So, after sunset, Moḥarib and I left the village, and retired together into a little grassy dell not far distant, shut in by hill and rock. There we recited the *Fatiḥah*;² and, after solemn pledges of mutual and in-

¹ "Brotherhood:" the ceremony itself is described further on. It is not rarely practised among the Bedouins of the interior, and is sometimes called *Mushatibah*. Its performance imposes the strictest obligations of mutual fidelity and assistance during life; and should one of the "brothers" happen to be killed, the other is bound to avenge his death.

² The opening chapter of the Koran; it is the invariable preface to all contracts, engagements and the like, among Mahometans.

violable faith, each of us opened a vein of his left arm, somewhat above the elbow, letting the blood run down and mingle in a brass cup which, under one pretext or other, I had borrowed for the occasion from the keeper of the *kaḥwah*. Out of this cup we drank, each a full draught, becoming thus, according to Bedouin usage, 'brothers' for life and death. The stars were out, pale in the dark sky, as we re-entered the village.

"For that night and next morning, till with the rest I crossed the Khaboor ford, my new-found Bedouin friend never left me. He accompanied me through the water; on the further side we embraced and separated; but when, after we had made a considerable distance on the road, I turned and looked back, I saw his slender form still standing where I had left him, watching to the last moment his newly-adopted brother.

“My courage rose at the sight: I was no longer alone and single-handed. True, it was not till a later period that I knew how steadfast an ally I had gained in this young Arab; but even then it seemed to me that more had been restored to me in Moḥarib than I had lost in Sa’eed; and in Aḵ-Arslan a better master—though this was not, as it proved, truly the case—than in the ill-fated Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo. Might not,—would not, Zahra’ also be restored, given me? I was full of hope; my boat had got into the flowing current once more; my winter blossomed into spring. I thanked Providence and worshipped in my heart.”

“A likely, spirited young fellow,” here interposed Tanṭawee, as Hermann paused awhile in his narrative, “is often, when all is said, the best Providence for himself, if he will only keep his eyes well open and his heart

well up. Success in life follows, like every thing else, the great laws of Nature; under certain conditions it must necessarily result, just as failure is inevitable under others. How the conditions themselves are determined is, I admit, another question."

"And what, pray," asked Hermann, "is your own opinion on that point?"

"The proper thing to say," rejoined Tāntawee, "would be, of course, that God determines them. My own answer, if you must have it, would be rather differently worded, though, after all, its meaning is, in reality, pretty much the same as that of the other. I hold, then, that these conditions, whether of person or of circumstance, of will, passion, choice, country, associates, and the rest, are nothing else than the pre-defined and necessary results of that which has gone before; and that they and all besides them

enter into and centre in the eternal self-developing existence of the universe. It is all one, spirit be it or matter: spirit is the cause, the life; matter, the form, the manifestation; each under unnumbered modifications, and the whole uniting in the measureless general life and existence which always have been and will always be.

“There now,” he continued, “you have, in a few words, the opinion of our own 'Omar Ebn-el-Farid,¹ and of all others worth naming for thought in all lands, East or West; when, that is, they know how to express themselves.

“Not an aimless world,” he went on, with more animation than usual in his manner, as Hermann remained listening and silent; “not a centreless circle, an eyeless socket, a hope-

¹ A mystic poet of great beauty, native of Cairo in Egypt. His works are to this day the text-book of Mahometan metaphysicians. He flourished about A.C. 1060.

less 'it is, and so must be,' without above or beneath, behind or before, without purpose, direction, or goal; no, nor a no less aimless Deity, creating or destroying, protecting or ruining, feeding or letting starve, life-giving or slaying, by the mere caprice of 'I can, and I choose to do so,'—a way of acting disgraceful in a man, let alone in a God such as they suppose Him; nor an autocrat God, occupied with Himself only, ordering all for His own glory, His own good pleasure, His own selfish will. No, none of these; but an intelligent and all-pervading Life, Thought, Act, under countless modes and forms, working on everywhere to higher existence and enjoyment; and perfecting, while it pervades them, the manifestations it assumes and the matter which it vivifies; not as things separate or distinct from itself, but ultimately One, One only with it in the great All of Being."

“You have said it,” replied Hermann, “and well, I daresay; though I cannot quite follow out your meaning. But what, meanwhile, becomes of the prophets, their books, their systems, and their creeds, with all their set prayers, their fasts, festivals, and religions of dogma and ceremony? What place do you leave for them?”

“Symbols, formulas,—nothing more,” answered Tāṭawee. “Mere approximations,—some completer, some more defective,—to the one and only truth that all aim at and none attain, except it be by a rare occasional point of contact, nor always even that. How, indeed, can a measured circle coincide with the ‘infinite?’ Still, they may pass muster as formulas, if held for such alone, not for the things they are meant to denote; and in this view they are well and good enough for those who like them. But a sensible man,

while putting up with one of them, that, for instance, which best suits his nationality, education, employment, turn of mind, and so forth, will really and inwardly bind himself to none."

He paused. For reply Hermann recited the well-known distich of Aboo-l-'Ola'.¹

"Muslims and Christians are equally blind,
The Jews and the Pagans in error no doubt.
All over the world but two classes we find,—
Fools with religion, and wise men without."

He repeated these verses with something of a sarcastic bitterness in his voice, that showed him far from approving of them. Tanṭawee readily caught his meaning.

"Why, boy," said he, "if Aboo-l-'Ola' meant, as I do not doubt he did, for he was no shallow thinker,—by religion, set forms and dogmas, he was right enough, and I, for one, am of his

¹ A poet, native of Ma'arraḥ in the north of Syria ; he flourished about the year A.C. 1000. His works are still extant and popular in the East.

school. Can you not see that forms while they include exclude also, and that dogmas narrow while they define? Or do you not perceive that the only absolutely true religion,—were such possible,—must be one that by limiting itself to none, takes in all; formless, because larger than any form?”

Hermann heard, waited, looked down upon the deck and thought, smoked hard at his pipe, which had nearly gone out, to get it well alight again; then at last said,

“In matters of this kind, Tāntawee, I prefer contenting myself with what lies clear and unmistakable before me, and try to make the best I can of present life and duty; what else is beyond and above me, I leave to Him who is above me, and He will, I do not question, take care of it. ‘The day-dawn dispenses with the star,’ as the Arab proverb says,—the certain with the uncertain. And I

for my part find occupation enough, and pleasure, too, in what surrounds me, to care little about trying to peep over the hedge and see what lies or does not lie outside the garden. We shall get to that outside soon enough, and then there will be time plenty and to spare for thinking about it. I did not trouble myself about this world before coming into it; nor do I see any use in troubling myself about the next either before I reach it. He who has taken good care of me in the one, can and doubtless will, take equally good care of me in the other, without my having to make bargains with Him, or to anticipate arrangements."

"A very practical way of looking at the subject," laughed Tāntawee; "and in the meanwhile, what were your next adventures?"

"Such as you will hardly believe when you hear them," answered Hermann; "but believe

or not, I can only tell you what happened ; and if you choose to suppose me romancing, the fault is not mine, but yours, who asked me to tell the tale."

PART II.

O lost, and found, and lost again !
I cannot speak in prose or verse
This grief ; yet fain would I rehearse,
As though rehearsal lessened pain.

Drear without thee the glittering day,
Though dawned on Carmel's purple height ;
And drear the star-bespangled night
Upon the sea of Africa.

THE moon was up over the quiet waters, and the ship, scarcely impelled by a faint land-breeze, too gentle to ruffle the glassy surface of the sea, and only just catching in the upper sails, drifted slowly along with the coast current. High alongside rose the dark mass of Carmel ; and about its base a few scattered and twinkling lights, indicative of quiet land-homes and Syrian life on shore, could, even at that distance, be discerned.

Hermann and Tanṭawee had separated for a time after their lengthened conversation, and

had busied themselves the latter part of the afternoon—Hermann in looking over the arms and accoutrements of his men on board, with whom he was a great favourite; Ṭanṭawee in animate discussion of the coming Syrian campaign, with some of the elder officers of the expedition. They had, however, met again for supper on the quarter-deck, drank their coffee together, and smoked their pipes, but without again touching on the topics of their noontide discourse.

At last, when the red western streak had wholly disappeared from the clear sky, and the “wolf’s tail,” as Arabs term the zodiacal light, alone marked the quarter of the heavens where the sun had set, Hermann rose, and standing on his carpet facing the *kibleh*,¹ now almost

¹ The direction of the Ka’abeh, or sacred building of Mecca; Mahometans, wherever they may be, turn thither in prayer.

exactly astern of the vessel, went through the night prayers,—a ceremony which, whether at home or on a journey, he rarely neglected. This done, he moved forward, and sat, silent and alone, near the prow of the ship, apparently observant of nothing but the shining ripple at the cutwater. Tanṭawee watched him for awhile across the dark figures of sailors and soldiers, already the most part wrapped up in their cloaks asleep, and laid like chance bundles about the deck ; but thought it best to leave him just then quiet to his own reflections, and not hurry him in renewing a story which evidently pained while it soothed the narrator,—like a hand laid, however gently, on a sore.

But when the moon, now in her third quarter, was up and shining over sea and ship, and Hermann still continued seated where he was, motionless and regardless of everything around, as if charmed,—Tanṭawee thought it time to

try and break the spell that seemed to have fallen on him. Night might else go by thus ; the morning would come with all its cares of landing and disembarkment, of turmoil and bustle, of fighting, perhaps, and how then, in so busy a present, find leisure or inclination for stories of the past ? So he, too, rose and went to the fore part of the ship ; as he approached, he heard Hermann humming over to himself what sounded like the words of a song, which he ceased on noticing Ṭanṭawee close beside him.

“What was that you were repeating so ? verses ? or what else ?” asked Ṭanṭawee ; as, after a brief salutation, he took his place by his friend on the deck.

“Nothing ; never mind,” replied Hermann ; “mere nonsense. I will tell you another time, perhaps.”

Ṭanṭawee looked him full in the face ; the

moonlight showed it glistening with fresh-shed tears. Hermann turned his head aside. The Arab Beg took his friend's hand gently in his own, and holding it, said, "Your thoughts were with her, and so were your verses; is it not so?"

The pressure of Hermann's hand was the only answer he received; but it sufficed.

"You met again, I am sure," continued Tāntawee, taking advantage of this sign, such as it was, for re-opening the subject about which he longed to hear.

"We did," answered Hermann, in a strangely toneless voice; "and—O God!—I could almost wish that we never had, at least that last time. God only knows how it may have ended with her;—for me, would—" He broke off with a short bitter sob, and drew away his hand.

"Bear up; be a man, my dear fellow," said

Ṭanṭawee. “And, for our friendship’s sake, for your own, for hers, perhaps, tell me how it ended. You have now been sitting here alone these two hours, brooding over these things, and freshening them up in your mind; it will do you good, believe me, to speak out once for all. If you keep thoughts of this kind close locked up in yourself, you will go mad some day.”

“I am mad already, or nearly so,” rejoined Hermann, “but you are right, I think. Sit down, then,”—for Ṭanṭawee had risen and was standing before him,—“sit down, and I will tell you the whole, come what may. But first,” he added, “swear to me by all you fear and all you hope, that you will never by word or sign recall anything of what you are about to learn of my miserable story—not even to myself.”

The Beg gave the desired pledge, and Hermann, having brushed the tears from his

eyes and assumed an easier posture, thus continued his narrative :—

“ On our arrival at Jezeerah, Aḳ-Arslan Beg took me into his dwelling, the huge battlemented building of black stone on the right-hand bank of the Tigris, near the landing-place, and gave me employment in his retinue, no more as a slave, but as a free-man among his outriders or guards. My paper of manumission was duly made out before the Kāḍee of the place and witnesses; I have it still. This done I was the equal of my fellows ; and soon, thanks to the Beg’s favour, came to be looked on as a person of some consideration amongst them. Besides, I soon proved myself to be a good rider, a sure marksman, and, in the athletic sports, which formed our ordinary recreation, inferior to none, superior to many. The Pasha’s service—may God have mercy on him !—had

been an excellent training-school for me, and I had profited by it.

“Two months passed before I could get any information of the kind that my whole heart longed for from Diar-Bekr. Twice, indeed, during this period, the pursuit of thievish Koordes from the mountains, who had driven off some of Aḳ-Arslan's cattle,—for he was a great proprietor of live stock, and very knowing about it,—took myself and the companions of my band almost up to Mardeen. But even then I could elicit from no one tidings about the Sheykh Asa'ad the Sheybanee by my indirect questions, and I was afraid to put direct ones. Nor did my young Bedouin, Moḥarib, re-appear, though I expected him day by day, and often looked for him ; till I began to think that something must have happened to him, or that he had forgotten his promises. Not that I cared

much in truth whether I ever saw him again or not ; but to my over-wrought fancy every disappointment took a form of exaggerated dimensions ; and my sky, after a moment's brightening, seemed now overclouding anew.

“ But at last, towards the beginning of the month of Doo-l-Ka'adeh,¹ when the days were growing on to their longest, and the summer heat to its hottest, came a joyful change. A messenger arrived, not from this place or that, but from Diar-Bekr itself. He was sent by a relative of my new master's ; and the letter which he bore requested the honour of the Beg's presence at a family wedding, fixed for one of the weeks following the festival of Doḥeyya,² now not far off. The

¹ The eleventh month in the Mahometan year, and the second after the fast of Ramadan.

² This festival, also called “El'Eyd,” or “The Festival,” by pre-eminence, occurs annually on the twelfth day

relative in question was old and wealthy, and the degree of kinsmanship a tolerably near one; so that, after some deliberation and delay,—during which I, who knew how nearly the result would in all likelihood concern me, endured torments of anxiety little guessed by those around me,—the Beg determined to comply with the invitation.”

“A prudent look-out, I suppose, for contingent reversions of something worth taking trouble for. Hang these strict observers! the Beg was one of them, I conclude, by what you repeated of his conversation; they always have an eye to the main chance. I declare, Aḥmed, I was myself quite alarmed to see the business-like way in which you went about your prayers a couple of hours since.” This Tanṭawee said, not seriously, but intending

of the month Doo-l-Ḥajjeh, the last of the Mahometan year, immediately following Doo-l-Ḳa'adeh.

to procure a diversion to his comrade's melancholy. Hermann, however, let the banter go by apparently unnoticed ; only he paused half a minute and then resumed :

“What followed exceeded my hopes. Ak-Arslan called me to him, and—oh happiness!—ordered me to start at once with two others, and precede him to Diar-Bekr, there to announce his coming ; he himself would follow more at leisure in a week or so. At the same time he gave me in charge some letters, with directions to whom I was to deliver them, and some valuable ornaments of Bagdad gold-work, intended as a present for the future bride.

“With difficulty I restrained the agitation of excessive joy, and took his commands with an outward calmness which was far from my real feelings. Had a sceptre been placed in my hands, I should have received it with

less exultation of heart than I did those letters. My horse and weapons were soon ready, and I set out, with many feigned complaints to the companions assigned me about the annoyance of so long a journey in the heat, and a great affectation of ignorance regarding Diar-Bekr, and everything there. I might have spared my dissimulation; for two thicker-witted Koordes than my two fellow-horsemen I never saw; eating, sleeping, and hectoring it over every one we met on the road, was all they seemed to understand doing.

“For myself, however boisterously disposed I often was at other times, I now cared little, or nothing rather, for these things. Our road was to Diar-Bekr, and its sole goal, so far as I was concerned, was Zahra’. Like one benumbed by the very excess of feeling, I went on mechanically though eagerly; lending, indeed, a sort of forced

attention to the way and its incidents, but really as indifferent to such surroundings as though I had been bodily in a desert land, a thousand miles away. Now that after so long an absence, such cruel delay, such anxious waiting, a hope of meeting, a certainty almost,—and that within a few days only,—was actually present, the whole hidden under-current of desire, fear, and love, came suddenly up from the depths where it had always been flowing, though most times but half perceived, and in an instant overran the whole surface of my existence. One moment I pictured to myself the best that love could anticipate from the meeting of long-parted lovers; another, I experienced in imagination all the agony of arriving and finding her gone, or inaccessible to me, or dead; inconstant I could not dream her.

“In this state of mind every circumstance

of the journey, however unimportant or unmeaning in itself, took colour from my wild fancy. I am not superstitious—”

“Indeed!” remarked Ṭanṭawee, half aloud; “are you quite sure of that?” The other went on—

“But now, the flight of a hoopoe or a yellow-hammer across the road, the unexpected sight of a gay flower, the meeting of a cheerful face, became an augury of happiness awaiting me; while a mottled crow,¹ a dead branch, or an ugly cripple by the wayside, darkened my mind with the shadow of omened evil. All this, however, resolved itself ultimately into one question undecided after a thousand idle conjectures and superfluous self-tortures: was she still where I had left her, in her father’s house?

¹ A bird reckoned by Arab superstition of specially evil prognostic for lovers.

or had the expected Bedouin suitor,—ill-luck betide him,—arrived, and borne her away to regions whither to follow might in reason appear a hopeless effort, and to discover her when there still more hopeless? These doubts were, however, destined to be dispelled before I reached Diar-Bekr.

“The sun was already half-way down between noon and setting; we had, for speed’s sake, taken the shorter road and by the hills, instead of the easier but circuitous track across the plain of Nisibeen; and were now on the second day of our departure from Jezeerah, between Mediad¹ and Mardeen. We had just descended by a narrow winding path down a steep slope, so thick set with underwood, then in its thickest of green leaf, that it was impossible to see even a few

¹ A large village in a defile of Karajah-Dagh, the mountain-range south of Diar-Bekr.

yards before our horses' heads ; and emerging at the base of the declivity, we found ourselves in a small, treeless plain, perfectly level, and carpeted with green grass, where a stream, winding along the midmost of the valley, maintained freshness and moisture around it, even in the heat of summer. About a quarter of a mile in front rose the opposite range, exactly resembling that which we had just passed, and, like it, covered with dwarf oak and bush, amid which our way was next to lead ; while on either side, to right and left, as we rode along, the valley stretched far away in a thwart direction.

“ Arrived on the open flat, I instinctively looked round about me to enjoy the comparatively free view, and saw a figure rapidly approaching,—almost at a running pace,—from the far end of the valley. As it neared us I recognised my adopted brother of Zakoo,

young Moḥarib; he was accoutred after the ordinary Bedouin fashion, and carried in his hand the invariable switch; his only weapon was a sheath-knife stuck in his girdle. Though on foot he soon came up with our band, saluted us in general with the 'Ah! welcome,' of the desert;¹ and then making for my horse's side, kissed the hand which I held out and laid in his.

“‘Welcome to you, too, my brother! where do you come from? and where have you been all this while?’ said I. ‘I had almost given up hope of seeing you again.’

“‘I was with the men of my tribe,’ answered he, while he returned my greeting, ‘not far from this, in the plain to the south,’ pointing

¹ The regular “Salam aleykum,” or “peace be on you,” of orthodox Mahometan use, is more often reserved by Bedouins for, so to speak, state occasions.

with his switch towards that quarter. I heard that a party of you were going to Diar-Bekr; and, thinking that you might probably be one, I came by a cross-track to meet and accompany you a part of the way."

"‘You have no horse,’ said I, looking at his sandalled feet, ‘and we are mounted: how can you keep up with us?’

"‘Some footmen may outstrip horsemen,’² rejoined Moḥarib. Then, drawing closer up, he made me a sign to fall back behind my companions. I did so.

"‘I have news for you, brother,’ continued he. ‘You know all about the Sheykh Asa’ad, and his family, and the Sheybanees of Diar-Bekr,—is it not so?’

"‘What of them?’ I interrupted hastily; then, recollecting myself,—‘What have I to

² Arab proverb.

do with them ? or what interest have I in their news ? ’

“ Moḥarib checked and quieted me. ‘ Never mind,’ he said, ‘ do not be alarmed, and do not try to disguise yourself from me, my brother ; there is no cause ; besides, I know your story. What, however, I now have to tell you is this : that the Emeer Daghfel, the Sheybanee, is already on his way northward, and will be here in a month or so at most,—he and his men, fifty or sixty of them. There is no need to ask what his errand is.’

“ I remained silent ; denial would, it was clear, avail me nothing. The lad was certainly in possession, if not of the whole, at any rate of the chief part, of what I had fancied my secret. What then ? Could I trust in his fidelity—his discretion ? Yet everything in his manner gave me to understand that I, or rather that Zahra’—for to her my thoughts

turned instantly far more than to myself—was in no danger of inconsiderate disclosure where he was concerned. But how had he come to know it? What had he to do in the matter?

“Moḥarib easily divined my thoughts, and with his hand still on my bridle, continued, ‘All is right, brother; but the roadside is no place for talk like this. I will explain it to you in the evening at Azkah,¹ where you will halt for a few hours; after that I shall leave you, but we shall meet again at Diar-Bekr.’

“I thanked him, and agreed to what he said. We then pressed forward, I trotting my horse, he running alongside with the lightness of foot peculiar to the Bedouins of the South, till we overtook my two companions, with whom we joined in vague conversation.

¹ A small village on the Mardeen track.

A load was off my mind, and my tongue, tied up hitherto, was now loosened. The Koordes, on their part, saw nothing in the lad to arouse suspicion. They were accustomed to Bedouins of his class, and Moḥarib gave, before long, what was, in their mind, a fully sufficient reason for his, or any other Arab's, wishing to keep alongside of us, by a broad hint of his expectation to share in our supper that evening: an ordinary Bedouin manœuvre. To this I added further plausibility by a story, invented to hand, of my having, some months previous, passed a night under the tents of his clansmen, the Benoo-Riaḥ, and having been hospitably entertained by them. The Koordes were satisfied, and inquired no more.

“At sunset, we entered the long inclosures and single dirty street or lane of Azkah, where we took up our quarters in the rubble-built

cottage of the village mukhtar.¹ While supper was preparing, Moḥarib found opportunity to talk with me in private, and gave me many particulars regarding my Nejdee rival, and his late movements.

“The sum of what he told me was this. Daghfel had², it seems, been detained in the uplands of Zulfeh² during the whole of the autumn and winter seasons, by prolonged feuds between his tribe and their neighbours. With the arrival of spring, a settlement had at last been effected, and the Emeer put at liberty to make his own preparations, and finally to set out on his long-concerted journey.

“I was much too ignorant then of any Eastern geography, except that of the lands over which I had myself travelled, to be able

¹ The head man of a hamlet; or, in towns, of a street-quarter.

² A town on the north-east of Nejd.

to follow Moḥarib in his minute catalogue of the localities by which the Sheybanee caravan would have passed, or were about to pass ; but this much was clear even to my apprehension, that the Emeer had already made more than half the distance, and would within a few weeks be in person at Diar-Bekr. His stay there, said my informant, might be expected to last a fortnight or somewhat more ; after which he and his men would return to their ordinary quarters below Zulfeh, taking his bride—my Zahra'—along with him.

“ My heart sunk at the thought ; I could not even speak ; but Moḥarib cheered me, and encouraged me to believe that my chances were not so very desperate after all ; the contrary rather. But to my many inquiries as to the means by which I might succeed, the plan of action which I should follow when the time came, I could for the moment obtain no distinct answer.

“‘Do not trouble yourself about that yet,’ he said; ‘be prudent, keep quiet, and wait; to each time its counsel; the night is long, and the moon up;’¹ when the moment comes, I will not be wanting. My brother,’ he added, with the warmth of evident sincerity in his words, ‘trust me; may I be your ransom, but I will help you to obtain what you desire, or I will die at your feet.’ We both wept.

“‘But how did you become aware of my love?’ I asked.

“‘Hearts have eyes,’ he answered. ‘Your face, the tone of your voice, everything about you told me that you were a lover the first moment I saw you. My cousin too, he whom you met a year ago in the market-place at Moşool, and there questioned you about the Sheykh Asa’ad, said that you seemed to have

¹ A Bedouin proverb, implying that there is no hurry.

some special knowledge of the sheykh and his family; and from this I was led to conjecture who was the object of your love. The rest I learnt in Diar-Bekr, where I was last month;—do not be alarmed: it was not told me by any one outside, but by a girl of the house itself, a maid of the haram; and she, too, knew very little, nothing indeed. But what she said served me to understand more; the dawn is evident to him who has eyes.¹ No one else, I am sure, has guessed anything; and as to the girl, I will engage for her silence. However,' he added, with the stealthy glance around peculiar to his race, 'one cannot be over cautious in affairs of this sort; and when you get to Diar-Bekr, do not forget to remain perfectly quiet at first; go nowhere, and wait till I come.'

¹ Arab proverb.

“We had renewed our conversation after supper; it was a murky starless night, and we were standing behind a cowshed outside the house. Again and again I begged him not to delay his arrival in the town; again and again he renewed his promise, and advised caution. He then bade me farewell, and disappeared in the darkness. I re-entered the room where we had taken our meal, and found the red glow of the wood-embers on the hearth its only light, and my two Koordes fast asleep and snoring on the dais near by. How changed they, the room, everything, looked in my eyes!

“Next morning we reached Mardeen; and after a short halt galloped on again. The third day before noon we came in sight of the well-known gardens and the black walls behind, passed the gates, and entered Diar-Bekr. I could have thrown myself on the

ground and kissed the pavement of the streets as we went along.

“Without loss of time, we inquired for the abode of Afsheen Beg; that was the name of my master’s kinsman. To reach it we had to traverse the whole length of the sook. It was market day, and the crowded state of the narrow and crooked thoroughfares nearly put me beside myself with impatience at our frequent delays. After the sook followed a few more turnings, till at last we arrived at the outer gate of a large and well-built house; the portal was prettily carved in stone. Here we alighted; my comrades remained with the horses in the courtyard below, and I, after being properly announced, went upstairs with my letters and presents.

“Afsheen Beg was snugly seated in a corner of his large divan, well cushioned around, and, though it was the hottest time of the day,

and almost of the year, wrapped in a wide mantle of choice furs. His beard was white, his shoulders bent, his face wrinkled, and his whole form shrunk with age. As I respectfully saluted and stood before him, I thought to myself, ‘And is it to such as these that girls sell themselves for money, or are sold?’”

“Yes,” here interposed Tāṇṭawee, “precisely to such as these, and are very glad of their bargain too. Men and women alike, though perhaps, on the whole, women more than men; that which they call love is most often, excuse me for saying it, mere selfishness under a fine name. The object, I admit, is apt to differ, since the man’s side of the bargain is commonly the gratification of sensual passion; the woman’s, money, rank, and ornament.”

“Did I think so—,” broke in Hermann,—“but no, it is your own cynical nature that speaks, not the truth of fact.”

“Fact and truth too,” answered Tāntawee. “Look around you. Yet I admit there are some rare exceptions; a few among men, a fewer still among women; still there are some.”

“My experience is wholly contrary,” said Hermann. “I have found much true friendship among men, much deep love in women. I too myself have loved, do yet love; and I can no more question the sincerity of my love where I give it, than I can that of my hatred where I feel it; and I judge of others by myself. Unloving natures are, to my mind, the exception; loving ones the rule; whether East or West, Asiatic or European, men or women. Race has little to do with this, climate less, sex nothing at all. The manner and the manifestation may and do vary; but the nature is the same in all, and love is no less essential to it than life.”

“Well, may you never have cause to alter your opinion,” replied his friend. “But remember, I admitted that there are exceptions; and it is exactly because you yourself are one of them that you think as you do.”

“How so?” asked Hermann.

“I mean,” replied the other, with a half-laugh, “you allowed that you judge of others by yourself. Of course you do: every one does. Now hear me: the man who can forget his own interests, he can love, so can the woman also; but such are rare, Aḥmed Beg—rarer than you imagine. I am willing to believe,” he added, “that your Zahra’ was one of these; so too, if his professions were genuine, was your Moḥarib. But, then, it is not every one that would have met them, or to whom they would have turned. Like to like holds good in these things as in most: you are unselfish yourself, and naturally meet

with unselfishness in others,—that is, where it can possibly be met with.”

“Is that your opinion of me?” said Hermann, in a doubting tone of voice. Tanṭawee now laughed outright, and laid his hand caressingly on his young friend’s shoulder.

“For all your twenty-five years you are only a silly boy,” said he; “and boys are generally unselfish till they learn better,—or worse. Well for you if you never learn, and remain a boy all your life. Now go on with your story.” Hermann complied.

“The old Beg was overjoyed at our arrival; and the presents, which were in truth very handsome,—I longed to set aside a few of these ornaments for my Zahra’, but that was impossible,—completed his delight. He gave orders to have us lodged in the most comfortable quarters, and set the best of his house before us. His hospitality was lost on me,

who was too preoccupied to appreciate its advantages; not so on my companions, who revelled heartily in the good cheer set before them, besides giving themselves airs of importance in proportion to the studied courtesy of our host. My own feeling was one of satisfaction too, but arising from a very different cause,—namely, the liberty left me to pursue my own plans and objects, by the eagerness of my fellows in enjoying their animal comforts.

“Dinner over, an hour yet remained before sunset. I had not forgotten Moḥarib’s advice; but thought there could be no harm in using this time for looking a little about me. So I strolled out, and sauntered from street to street, from *kaḥwah* to *kaḥwah*, joining freely in conversation with all I met. My dress, which now was that of an ordinary Koordish horseman, and totally unlike the cut of my former clothes; my

increased height and breadth ; my bearing and face, which now showed alike the impress of fatigues and danger endured, and of freedom won ; in fine, a general air of manliness,—though you do call me a boy, Ṭanṭawee,—disguised me awhile from many who would have at once recognised the smooth-featured, well-dressed, silver-ornamented slave-lad of fifteen months before.

“ But a few of the keener-sighted townsfolk knew me again, in spite of change ; the news of my arrival quickly passed from them to others, and a crowd of questioners and listeners gathered around me. Many were the inquiries about what had happened at Bagdad, how I came to have left that place, what I was doing at present, how I had acquired my liberty, etc., etc. In return I found out, that which most I wanted to learn, that no change had occurred in the circumstances of the Sheykh Asa’ad and

his household ; all was, at least in common town-talk and belief, on the old footing ; nor did any one by word, hint, or gesture, so much as imply the least consciousness of my having any particular interest in that quarter. Satisfied so far, I returned to the house, and slept on an easy mattress more comfortably than I had done for many nights past.

“ But next morning my old restlessness returned. So near the aim of all my longings, and yet debarred from their possession ; so near Zahra', yet not only unable to see her, but even to acquaint her with my nearness ! For two or three hours I roamed up and down, here and there, hoping every moment to meet Moḥarib ; but no Moḥarib appeared. Time passed ; the shadows shortened, and my impatience, once indulged, grew and became uncontrollable, like water that has begun its way through a dam by degrees, then strengthens every minute, and

bursts down all before it. In an evil hour, I resolved to try my fortune myself, and single-handed."

Tanṭawee shook his head. "You ought to have waited. The young fellow had his reasons, and good ones I am sure, in the advice he gave you. The caution of these long-headed Bedouins is seldom at fault, but it is never superfluous ; I have often experienced it when dealing with them."

"I now see that I was wrong," said Hermann ; "but I was then in a state of mind incapable of right reasoning ; and, as matters turned out, had I acted otherwise, the result would have been much the same. My folly was, however, none the less. But this is useless self-reproach ; let me continue my story.

"Blessing inwardly the length of the summer day, I turned my steps in a well-known direction, and soon found myself before the gate of

my former master's chief friend, the proprietor of the dear-loved garden and kiosk, Rustoom Beg. I entered the house ; the Beg received me with all the profusion of affectionate welcome, that an elderly and childless man often shows to a young one ; to which was besides added a special tenderness of feeling towards me, induced by the memory of pleasant by-gone times, and of poor Kara-Mustapha-Oghloo Pasha, then so often his guest. He too, was insatiate of hearing ; and I had again to recount in their fullest detail all the sad events of the winter and the spring ; and next to follow them up with the narrative of my own escape, my meeting with Aḡ-Arslan Beg at Mosool ; how I had entered his service, how come to Diar-Bekr.

“ But this was not enough ; the whole household naturally imitated the example of their lord, in demonstrations of undiminished friend-

ship, and in endless questions, alternating with equally endless civilities. Coffee followed pipes, and pipes coffee ; then came a copious noonday meal, with relays of sliced cucumbers, fruits, melons, and the rest ; then more pipes and more coffee, till I began to fear I should never find leisure for getting away, and enjoying the run, now mine once more, of the garden. Besides the Beg and his men each one thought,—a slight mistake on their part,—that my only object in coming was to see them. God bless them ! I really felt half-ashamed of my own forced double-dealing with them, and my intense inward impatience to be rid of their well-meant kindnesses ; but ‘behind the hillock there is what there is,’¹ as my friend Moḥarib might have said.”

“ I remember the saying,” interposed Tan-

¹ Arab proverb.

tawee; "only in this instance the relative positions of the maid and the youth were, it seems, reversed."

"However," Hermann continued, "some dropped off at last one way, and some another; till, when the afternoon was tolerably advanced, I was able to steal into the garden unobserved and alone.

"You may imagine how warily, how quickly I skulked along among the trees; how nimbly I climbed the pear-tree; how excitedly I gazed across the wall as I stood on my old look-out. To no purpose; except the splash of the running fountain and the occasional rustle of a bird, silence reigned over the neighbouring shrubbery. I could trace, as I had before, the avenue running through it; but neither black face nor white greeted my view. It might be, thought I,—it was more probable,—that tidings of my arrival had not yet pene-

trated to the Sheykh's ḥaram ; yet, again, it was just possible that they might ; if so, surely she would devise means to make me some signal, and where should she expect me but here ?

“ In vague and, as I could not but acknowledge to myself, almost groundless hope, I waited for about half an hour ; every minute convincing me more and more of the uselessness of my staying, yet unable to leave the spot so full of my happiest remembrances. Then, suddenly,—O despair !—I heard the sound of steps and the buzz of many voices approaching from the house, in the garden. I strained ear and eye. No ; there was no mistaking ; it was old Rustoom Beg himself, with a whole suite of attendants, come out to take the air and drink their afternoon coffee. In the kiosk ? Yes ; evidently they were making for the kiosk. Unsuspecting ? or had

they guessed—God forbid it!—who was there before them?

“‘Hang it!’ groaned I to myself, ‘it is summer, and now that they have once thought of this place, they will always be coming here. What is to be done?’

“Recollecting myself, however, I slid quietly but expeditiously down from my post, took a round among the trees behind, and, a few minutes later, re-appeared on the main-path, looking as innocent as I could, and with the air of having come by chance from a different part of the grounds, just in time to meet the Beg and his party, who, sauntering leisurely up, then reached the kiosk.

“I saluted them with assumed surprise; then joined them. One of them who had the key with him, opened the creaking door. Its hinges gave notice by their stiffness of not having been turned for many a day. We

entered a bare, dusty room, foul with cobwebs, and ascended a narrow inside staircase. It led us out by a second door, also not easy to open from long disuse, right on the roof, precisely on the very spot where I had, not five minutes before, been stationed on my worse than useless watch.

“The brown dust of Diar-Bekr lay thick on the plaster, and an attentive eye could detect the places where my tread had recently disturbed it. A like careful inspection might reveal something ruffled and broken in the small twigs and foliage of the pear-tree alongside.

“‘Look here; somebody has been on the roof to-day; he must have clambered up from the outside,’ remarked one of the suite.

“‘How could that have been?’ asked I, trying to seem very ignorant and surprised.

“Whether the Beg heard the remark or not,

I do not know ; certainly he said nothing about it ; but seating himself gravely on the carpet which his servants spread for him, took in hand his pipe ready lighted, and leaned composedly back against the cushions, enjoying the view, and talking with the nearest of the attendants about him, and especially with me. If he suspected any one in particular of being the trespasser, his manner did not indicate that I was the one.

“ ‘We must have a parapet raised on the right-hand side of this roof,’ said Rustoom Beg when after an hour and a half of smoke and chat he got up to leave his carpet. Just then, the declining rays of the sun, soon about to disappear behind the trees, reddened the latticed windows and the long wall of the haram opposite, on which the shadow of the upper part of the kiosk itself, and of our heads, too, showed with admirable distinctness. ‘A para-

pet must be built and the garden wall heightened, too. Why,—I beg pardon of God!—this roof looks right into Sheykh Asa'ad's haram. Strange that none of us should have noticed this before; but to be sure, it is now only four years since the haram was built, and the kiosk has been shut up all that time. God reminded me of it only this day.'

“‘Health and safety to our master; may God ever remember him for good, and keep him from all ill-fortune; no one certainly has been here on the roof of the kiosk for the last four years,’ compliantly subjoined one of the chibookjees.¹ I could have hugged the fellow for saying so; it gave me breath again. I had been in a perfect agony lest any one should make a contrary remark. But in my

¹ The term chibookjee, properly denotes one whose duty it is to look after his master's pipe; hence it has become synonymous with our “valet” in general.

agitation I could not help stealing a glance,—though against my will,—towards the other servant, a *kaḥwajee*,¹ a man of about thirty, who had attempted to draw observation to the step-prints on the roof when we first came up. I saw him now, though silent, looking hard at me. Our eyes met,—mine must have had a guilty expression in them; I felt that they had, and was heartily sorry for having turned my face in that direction. Again I remembered,—but now in bitterness of spirit,—Moḥarib's reiterated advice to attempt nothing before his arrival, and repented when repentance was too late.

“‘See to it,’ said the Beg to his *kaḥiya*, as they slowly descended the staircase, ‘that the parapet be built, and the wall properly

¹ This term literally means one who has care of the coffee for the household; but in common acceptance is nearly equivalent with our “butler.”

heightened to-morrow.' 'It shall be done, please God,' answered the other. Had the proposed constructions, with all their stone and mortar, been raised then and there upon my breast, I could not have felt more suffocated.

"We followed the Beg; I was the last of the party to leave the roof, but at the very moment that I turned to enter the narrow door leading to the steps, I heard what sounded like the cry of a wood-bird from precisely that quarter of the adjoining garden whence a similar sound had first reached me so long before. It was the same sound, yet not altogether the same, as then; I could not tell. None but myself heard or remarked it, and I, though with great difficulty, restrained myself from any outward sign; but the steps swam round with me, and I had to steady myself against the staircase-wall.

" 'The Beg will go early to-morrow morn-

ing on a visit to the Sheykh Asa'ad, to explain and apologise about the kiosk,' said one of the retinue, a native of Diar-Bekr, to me, as we sat together in a *kaḥwah* of the market-place, over a *nargheelah*, that evening.

"To have pretended ignorance as to who Sheykh Asa'ad was would have been awkward, and indeed, in my then state of feeling, impossible for me. So I contented myself by asking,—'Was that large reddish building the Sheykh's *ḥaram*? and does the garden next yours belong to it?' with a certain off-hand air of careless curiosity.

" 'Exactly so; the garden,' answered he, 'belongs to the *ḥaram*, and both of them to Sheykh Asa'ad. There will be grand doings in his house before long; though with what result God best knows.' He sunk his voice at the latter part of the sentence.

" 'What do you mean?' I inquired, my

curiosity now really excited by his change of tone.

“‘Nothing,’ he said, ‘only that the Sheykh, men say, has promised his only daughter, a miracle of beauty if report be true,—praise be to Him who created her,—to a Bedouin cousin of theirs from Nejd. They are all Sheybanees, and much too proud for marrying here among us. Well, if they like to fancy themselves great folks, why, it pleases them and hurts nobody,—they will not be the richer for it, nor we the poorer. But the upshot is that the Bedouin will soon be here, and fetch her away to his tents and camels.’

“‘Perhaps,’ I suggested tentatively, ‘no better offer was made for the girl that her family could have accepted.’

“‘No!’ answered he, ‘there are fifty Begs and Aghas would any one of them have

been glad to get her; and she might have now been living comfortably in one of the finest houses here, with all she could wish. But her father,—curse him for an Arab,—would hear of no one but this cousin, and so he is to have her after all.’

“‘All right; it is much the same to her, I suppose,’ said I, desirous indeed to prolong the conversation, yet scarcely knowing how to do so.

“‘No,’ he replied; ‘they say, on the contrary, that she does not like it at all; her family have settled it in spite of her. But let the Bedouin look to it when he does marry her, or the Jinnee¹ may be too much for him in the end.’

“‘The Jinnee!’ I exclaimed, ‘what is that? Tell me about it, brother.’

¹ A well-known spirit of common Eastern superstition.

“ ‘Why,’ answered he, ‘people say,—God knows the truth,¹—that last spring, about the same time that the Bagdad Pasha and the rest of you were here,—or soon after,—the Sheykh’s daughter was snatched away by a Jinnee,—God preserve us from the like. It is certain that the maid-servants of the haram noticed her going out at early dawn into the garden; then she disappeared entirely. They sought her everywhere and could not find her; at last, about noon, they discovered her lying on her face in a spot which everybody knows has always been haunted,—an old bit of ruin, close under the garden-wall. She did not move when they came up, nor give any sign of life. So they

¹ This, and similar devout-sounding interpolations, occur so frequently in the conversation of the lower orders especially throughout the East, that they cannot be entirely omitted, even in a free translation like the present.

carried her as she was into the house, and read the Ḳu'ran over her¹ till she came to herself, which she soon did. But for all they questioned her, she would never say a word on what had happened to her. Only from that day forward her cheeks, which had been like Damascene roses, faded; and her stature drooped, like a bough without water.

“ ‘ Besides, she would often get up in the dead of the night, and go on the ḥaram roof; where she would remain till morning looking towards the south, whence, there is no doubt, the Jinnee,—may God confound him,—was wont to come and visit her.

“ ‘ Her father, the Sheykh, called in the most learned Ḳu'ran-readers in the town and neighbourhood to drive away the Jinnee from her, but they could do nothing. At last, a month

¹ The ordinary Mahometan receipt for such cases.

ago, she suddenly vanished a second time, how nobody knows, for a whole day. When she re-appeared at home her face was red, her eyes were bright, her stature erect ;—God bless and keep her. From that hour since she has been just as she was before the Jinnee, curse him, visited her. They think he has left her alone ; but her maids say that she is afraid to marry, lest the evil one,—God guard us all,—should break her bridegroom's neck, or transform him into a dog, or some other shape, on the wedding night.'

"Here my friend stopped, and 'took refuge with God,' in the customary formula.

"I repeated it after him, for appearance' sake ; thinking all the while what a different interpretation I could give to the Jinnee and the rest of it ! But, ah, Zahra' ! what have you not endured on my account ; and which is greatest, your courage or your love ? And

I—how can I ever requite your love! O God, give us good for all this misery.

“Little heart was left me for continuing the talk; but I felt that it would not do to break off too abruptly, so I said :

“‘Very singular that the kiosk roof should have been left without a parapet, and that no one should have noticed it before till this afternoon.’

“‘I will bet you anything you like,’ answered the man, with a laugh which, however, had no personal meaning for myself in it, ‘that it has been often noticed already, and made use of too, by some of those on either side of the wall, only they took good care to say nothing about it. As for the Beg, I cannot for my life imagine what brought him to the kiosk to-day; I am sure he had not been there for years: it was a curious fancy. The ḥaram buildings are modern; that is true.’

“What further talk we had I do not remember, but I well remember my sleeplessness that night; indeed, what between hope, fear, regret, anxiety, and love, I was little likely to sleep. She was there; she had heard of my arrival; else how that signal? Was it she herself? No; of that I could not feel sure; yet it must have been by her order, if not her own giving.

“Moḥarib too; I now understood that he had at least been no idle boaster; he had undoubtedly, though how I could not imagine, established some kind of communication between her and intelligence from the outer world: so much was clear from the story I heard that evening, and taken in connection with, had rightly explained, what the lad himself had told me at Azḳah.

“But, more than all, she was still the same for me, still faithful, still resolved that nothing

should separate between her and me; still mistress, in a manner, of her own lot, and determined to remain so. The thought of what her constancy must have cost her was torture to my heart; but the hopeful assurance of future meeting and happiness almost changed that torture to delight.

“Thus far everything was well beyond my expectations, almost beyond my hopes. But Rustoom Beg’s visit to the kiosk, for the first time, and exactly when I was there; his remarks about the roof, the wall; and the subsequent order given,—could these be the result of mere accident? or was it not rather design? and by what instigation? to what end? I would not credit it; it could not be; impossible that he should have guessed anything about me or her; yet, if it was not for that, for what else was it? Then, again, the remark made about the footmarks, how unlucky! and

my own looks, they must have told against me. No ;—it was all my own imagination ;—yet no ; I was really under suspicion ; if not before, now at least the ḡahwahjee, confound him, would talk me over to his master ; and what might the consequences be, what might they not be, for myself—for her ? Then, too, what was I to do next day ? The kiosk ? that was at an end. The garden ? it would be full of workmen, of spies perhaps. And what if she, unaware of these events, of these changes, were to wait hour after hour on the other side ? Worse yet if she attempted any fresh signal ; might not the look-out discover her also ? Could I manage to give her timely warning ? And, again, if I did not come what would she think—she watching for me in vain ? Insupportable thought ! Yet how prevent it ?

“ Out of this labyrinth I could see no clue except Moḡarib. He had told me to expect

him; how then if he failed to appear? True, were he once in the town, I could trust his sagacity for finding me out; but a Bedouin's movements are uncertain: he might be at this very moment far away; he might be detained by his clansmen's affairs; and how was I to know how long to wait? To attempt anything was dangerous; to attempt nothing was, I knew, for me impossible.

"Well, whatever might be on the morrow, a few hours' sleep would perhaps settle my mind, and put me in a condition to devise something reasonable. I lay down; I might as well have tried to sleep on an ant's nest; I turned this way, and that way, covered my face and uncovered it; no sleep was to be had at any price; and the morning, when it came, found me more tired, but even more wakeful, than when I lay down."

"You ought to have consoled yourself,"

remarked Ṭanṭawee, "by recalling to mind, since you have a taste that way, all the pretty verses of amatory poets, proclaiming sleep to be absolutely out of the question for a genuine lover ; in fact, I am not clear whether you have not forfeited your claim to that honourable title by wishing and trying to go to sleep."

"That may be well enough in poetry," answered Hermann ; "but in practice it is very disagreeable ; and I doubt if even Ebn-el-Farid or Mejnoon-'Aamir really liked it when they experienced it ; unless indeed, which I think much the more probable, what they say on this subject, as on many others, is mere poetic fiction. 'They say what they do not,' as the Ḳu'ran has it of them."

"What God and his prophet say is the truth,"¹ answered Ṭanṭawee, with mock

¹ The stereotype phrase of orthodox Mahometans whenever the Koran is quoted in their presence.

gravity. "But please remember that I, for one, am not in love, nor have the smallest intention of being so, and I should like to get a little sleep some hour of this quiet night, if for nothing else, in view of the hard work before us to-morrow; so be a good fellow, and let me hear how the affair ended; because, if you do not tell me before I lie down, I might remain awake for thinking about it."

Hermann went on.

"It ended according to the ordinary rule of life, that where one anticipates many difficulties, one finds few; just as where one anticipates few, one finds many. Next morning, I had to go early into the town on some business of my master's which there was no shirking. It would occupy me, I calculated, till nearly mid-day, and my greatest fear was lest the Koordes, my travelling-companions, should propose, one or both of them, accompanying

me; but they, installed at their ease in a large apartment of the superannuated bridegroom's house near the outer door, resolutely declined to take part in any occupation except those of smoking, eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like sedentary or recumbent enjoyments, to which, for my part, they were perfectly welcome.

“Well pleased to be alone, I set out on my way to the sook, vainly looking to right and left as I went along for a square inch of Moḥarib's brown-red cloak, and puzzling myself as to what I should do when noon left me at liberty. But before reaching the market-place, just as I was turning out of a by-way into the main-street leading to the bridge, a small blackamoor in a very dirty shirt for his sole dress, and with a bare woolly head, trotted up alongside of me, and with a knowing grin, put something into my hand. It was a piece

of paper closely folded up. I opened it; inside was written in Arabic, 'After mid-day; the door with the red mark; come.'

"There was nothing else; neither name nor address; they would, indeed, have been merely superfluous. However, I would gladly have asked a question or two of the imp who had brought the message; but while my attention was occupied in unfolding and reading the paper, he was already off like a shot, and on my making a hasty step after him, only grinned the more and ran the faster. There was no one else by in the street.

"Refolding the precious document, and hiding it carefully in my breast-pocket, I went, light of heart, to my work. The hours went by, slowly enough to my eager impatience. At last they brought the time appointed.

"Noon, a still, burning noon, under a sky

dim and drowsy with the southerly wind, was proclaimed from the seventy-five tall minarets of Diar-Bekr. Prayers were said, and the inhabitants, issuing from the mosques, went to doze away the hot hours or, at all events, shut themselves up in their darkened rooms. The shops were closed, the *kaḥwahs* empty, the streets dusty and deserted. I remained a little while seated on a stone bench in the courtyard of a small mosque from which the last worshipper except myself had departed. The sun blazed silently on the clean white-washed walls before me, and sparkled in the little fountain and its overflowing water-troughs. I was impatient to be about my search after the door so vaguely indicated, yet almost reluctant to move; like a man on the edge of a pool, stripped for plunging, and hesitating before the plunge. The heat, too, and the heavy air, combined to oppress me.

“But now or never; I must be up and doing. The moment was favourable; no eye watched me; only a beggar at the mosque door laid fast asleep on the flags of the yard; the very dogs had retreated to their coolest and darkest haunts. My first object was to get, unnoticed by unseasonable friends and acquaintances, to the quarter of the town where stood the house of Sheykh Asa’ad. This was soon done; I had not twenty minutes to walk, and needed no guide. The next task, one not equally easy, was to discover the outside wall, if such there was, of the ḥaram, or at any rate of some building immediately connected with it: since it was evident that the door indicated by the message could be looked for nowhere else.

“I reached the place, and began reconnoitring it with the exactest possible scrutiny. The dwelling of the Sheykh stood not far

beyond the old town walls on the east; on three sides it was surrounded by garden; the fourth side was free, and overlooked a narrow shady path, leading down to the river. A long brick wall, behind which, so far as I could make out, ran a covered gallery, connected the house itself in this direction with the haram buildings. These last formed an oblong block, which presented one only of its four faces, and that one of the two narrower, to the road; at its angle the garden wall turned, and continued to run on, very high in this part, and built with jealous care to exclude all chance prying into what was behind it; till, after a considerable distance, it joined the inclosure and grounds of old Rustoom Beg. Thus the haram stood, so far as its front and two sides were concerned, entirely in its own garden. On one end it was connected with the Sheykh's dwelling-

house; what outlet or communication it might have on the other I did not know; the back of the building was on the public road.

“I began at the further extremity, where Sheykh Asa’ad’s own house and garden bordered the way. Here were indeed the indications of three entrances: one was blocked up and dis-used; the other two, a greater and a lesser, were open; but I saw no mark near them, nor did I expect to see any; it was the men’s quarter. Leaving these, I came opposite to the connecting wall, and the ḥaram itself. Here, passing leisurely along, I surveyed door after door, and even, in a sort of desperate self-delusion, window after window; but on none could I perceive the slightest trace of a red mark, or what could be construed into such, and give reasonable warrant for a trial of any kind. Marks enough there were, no

doubt; but they were unquestionably mere weather-stains, nothing more; besides, they were marks of long standing, not less than of self-formed shape; whereas, the one that I was directed to look for, would, in every probability, be fresh; and of a kind to draw at once the attention of a person seeking for it by pre-concerted agreement. No token of the sort was on this side certainly.

“Anxious and depressed I turned the angle; here at first it was worse. All down the corner from top to bottom was neither door nor window of any sort, size, or shape whatsoever. Remained the furthestmost and high-built part; under the shadow of this I now went, till, when I had surveyed full half its length, still finding nothing, and with disappointment deepening at every step into despondency, my eyes were cheered by the sight of a low door, on one side of which

was a slight but clear red mark, an oblique dash, as though made by a finger dipped in paint. It was evidently quite fresh, and if anticipated, could not fail to be noticed; scarcely otherwise.

“With a long-drawn breath, and a heart beating fit to burst the numerous buttons of my tight upper dress, I stopped, and looked around. On my right hand to the front was a narrow barren patch of stone-strewed ground; beyond it a field of maize, now green and tall; further on yet, an irregular indentation of lines caused by mounded banks and scrag tufts of brushwood, marked the course of a stream, winding downwards to the Tigris; but on that side there led neither road nor lane, only a small footpath; the blackish ranges of Karajah Dagħ closed the view. Behind me where I stood, tall trees shut everything in; on my left was the wall.

“No human being appeared in sight: a sparrow-hawk wheeling high in the air, and uttering now and then a plaintive cry, gave the only sound and motion to the dead calm of summer noon. I turned and faced the wall: it was very high, three times the stature of a man or rather more; and, except this one entrance, offered no break in its dingy continuity. Yet a moment I lingered in a last hesitation; and then, saying ‘in the name of God,’ rapped gently, and once only, at the door.

“It opened on the instant, no key had to be turned or bolt withdrawn; the person within was clearly expectant, and perhaps afraid of anything that might occasion unnecessary noise or delay. That person was a black eunuch; tall, raw-boned, and ugly enough to have on that score alone disarmed the most suspicious jealousy. He beckoned

me in. I entered. 'Under thy veil, O Veiler,'¹ he muttered, as he reclosed the door behind me; but this time he bolted it carefully.

"I took a survey of the place. It was a moderate-sized room, lighted by one close, latticed window immediately below the ceiling. The earth-floor was partly covered with coarse matting; the walls were indifferently plastered, and a country-made carpet, its gaudy colour-bands much faded, was spread on a raised and plaistered dais to represent furniture: of which, if I except a small oil-lamp in a niche above the dais, there was none else. Some red pitchers and coils of rope in one corner of the room, and a balta,² thrown in another, announced that these were the quarters of some menial employed in the wood-hewing

¹ A title under which the Deity is often invoked among Mahometans.

² A rough country axe.

and water-drawing line for the service of the Sheykh's ḥaram. This was indeed the Soodanee who stood before me, his quality of eunuch permitting him such close proximity to the female section of the household; for the room belonged to the ḥaram itself, though not reckoned among the regular apartments.

“The old fellow, for old the deep wrinkles on his hideous beardless face announced him to be, bade me welcome in a low voice, and assured me that I had nothing to fear; all was right. Then checking the questions I was about to ask, and ordering me, rather than telling, to remain perfectly still and quiet where I was, he left me; passing out by another door which led whither I did not yet know, and cautiously shutting it after him by a bolt on the outside.

“In a couple of minutes more,—a couple of hours I deemed them,—the bolt was with-

drawn, and the door opened gently. But this time it was no negro that passed through it; it was she, Zahra' herself, in a light in-door dress; over her head was cast a thin white veil, which she removed from her face as she came forward; a gold-embroidered girdle and a braid of pearls in her long dark hair were the only ornaments she wore that day. Calm, self-possessed, as I ever remembered her, but, to my eyes, somewhat taller and statelier and even lovelier than before, she entered with a smile brighter than the sunlight without, and, holding out her hand, welcomed me.

"You, Tanṭawee, are not and never were, I believe, a lover."

"No, thank Heaven," said the other: "never was, and hope never to be. I am not disposed to purchase a lump of sugar with a mountain of gall."

"Be it as you will," continued Hermann;

“but I hold that the sugar is the mountain and the gall a very small lump indeed compared with it. I will not,—I need not,—say how I answered her greeting ; how the first minutes passed, nor how the first half hour. Enough,—you asked me what I was humming over to myself when you first came up ; now hear :—

“Such love as hers I ne’er have found :
Such love as hers I ne’er shall find.
The chain in one our hearts that wound
Round other hearts may hardly wind.
I called it love : ’t was more than love ;
I called it passion : vain the word.
Nor depths below, nor heights above,
Such passion knew, such joys averred.

“’Tis past, ’tis gone,—a weight there lies
Within the heart ; a want is there ;
The ceaseless longing of blind eyes
To read some page of lettered care.
The page is blank ; nor keenest sight
Could ought avail,—but sight is none ;
While all around day’s cheerful light
Beams, cheerless to those eyes alone.”

And saying this he threw his two arms

across the bulwark of the ship, leant down his head between them, and exclaiming "O God! O God!" burst out into an agony of grief, painful alike to witness and to endure.

Tanṭawee looked at him with deep concern, and could hardly restrain his own tears, but did not say a word, or move from where he was; judging it better for his friend to come round by himself, and on coming round find sympathy close by to comfort him. Five minutes passed thus; then Hermann slowly raised his head, his eyes were swollen, but were now tearless,—he drew his sleeve across his face.

"Do not mind me," he said in a low voice, but steady, though without looking up. "It is over now,—only hand me the water-jug."

Tanṭawee did so in silence. Hermann washed his face with a sort of violence, swallowed a large draught of water, righted him-

self, and then, of his own accord and quickly, as if fearing lest his companion should say anything, resumed his story.

“We remained for about two hours in conversation. I was impatient to hear at once all about herself from her own lips ; how the time had passed with her since our separation,—with what fears, what hopes, what pleasures, what pains, what cares for the present, what plans for the future, how she had contrived this very meeting, how screened herself, and me too, from danger and discovery. But before she would satisfy my curiosity on any of these points, she insisted on my relating to her, one after another, the events, strange or sad, which had varied my life during the time of our separation. The narrative was brief, for her quick intelligence seemed to divine beforehand whatever I told, and to anticipate my words. While I was

speaking she remained still and listening, her eyes fixed on my face with a look in which it would have been hard to say whether attention, sympathy, or love predominated; and when I had finished she put her hand in mine,—we were seated as in the old days, side by side,—and said, ‘My dearest, my only love; dearest Aḥmed.’

“I gazed in her face,—it was the same as I had first known it, except that the light cheerfulness of its former expression, though still there, was now tempered with a graver look of settled resolve and will; her eyes seemed larger, too; her forehead whiter; her cheeks, now indeed flushed with pleasure, were habitually paler than before; there was even a something in her features that told of pain endured, till its endurance had become in a manner usual to her. She was thinner also, and, with a slight increase of height, had

acquired a new dignity of demeanour ; the almost childlike quickness of movement that she displayed a year before, had now calmed and steadied itself into perfect grace. I was in a mist of happiness.

“ ‘Zahra’, ah, dearest Zahra’,’ said I, ‘all these things that I have related are nothing to me,—less than nothing. Slavery, danger, wounds, hunger, want, weariness, the heat of the day, the night chill,—I do not account them, I do not feel them, I do not know them if they are or not, so your love, yours only, be mine. Ah, might I be dead, so you would but visit my grave ; might I be dust, so your foot trod on me. Ah ! I do not know what I say : you are my heart, my soul, my life. I have no life, no soul, but you.’

“ She smiled ; a smile to make winter spring, and spring paradise. ‘Believe me, Ahmed, my brother,’ she said, ‘whatever is in you, is

in me twofold. If your love is strong, mine is stronger yet ; you may know it one day.'

“ ‘ Ah, love,’ I answered ; ‘ your love needs no further proof. When I heard of how you had waited, of all you had suffered, my very heart was broken. I can never forgive myself for having been the cause :—can you forgive me ? A hundred times have I cursed my own selfishness for having even been content, been happy, a single moment while parted from you, and you in such grief.’

“ She was evidently surprised, and asked what I meant. I then told her what I had heard the evening before from Rustoom Beg’s man, about the Jinnee, and the rest. She saw that I had understood all, and was pained and confused that it should be so. She blushed crimson to her very neck, and covered her face with her hands. I sat silent before her, feeling guilty and distressed.

“ Looking up at last, she said, ‘ I beg pardon of God. The true and noble-minded only ought to be entrusted with secrets. My secret, which I thought hid, has been disclosed ; it is in your keeping, Aḥmed. Hide it anew with you, O my brother ; let me not be ashamed before you.’

“ She added no more ; but I perceived her meaning. ‘ You are my sister, Zahra’,’ I said ; ‘ your honour and the honour of your parents is mine also.’

“ ‘ I trust you ; but, as you would ever see me again,’ said she, earnestly, though tenderly, ‘ let no allusion to what you have just repeated ever pass your lips again ; promise me, Aḥmed.’

“ I promised ; she grew calm again. One only sigh escaped her ; she repressed a second. ‘ But now, my sister,’ added I, ‘ tell me how you came to know all so exactly about my arrival ; who gave you the news ?’

“ ‘ You may thank your brother Moḥarib, the Riaḥee, for that. Aḥmed, you do not enough value that lad ; he is worth a king’s treasure to you.’

“ She then went on to explain ; the facts were as follows,—

“ After my departure the year before, with my master the Pasha, none but the vaguest reports reached her for many months concerning those with whom I then was. It had been a long and dreary period of blank for her as for me. Only the general news of the assassination at Bagdad had travelled up to Diar-Bekr ; magnified as is the wont of such news. One account had placed me among the killed. She had steadily refused, said she, to believe it ; yet knew not how to expect ever to see me again alive. Meanwhile, her father pressed her Bedouin cousin, the Emeer Dagħfel’s, suit, more determinately than ever ; hoping in it to

see the end of the preternatural influences to which he and others at large attributed the depression of spirits and loss of health under which she manifestly laboured. She, on her side, tacitly encouraged their belief in a delusion which, while it misled, concealed.

“ One morning early, a month since, she had gone into the garden, as she often did, to sit alone near the spot where we had bidden each other farewell, when an Arab girl in her service came softly up, and said in a low voice, ‘ Be happy in him who arrives.’ Surprised, she asked the meaning ; and learnt that the girl, having gone abroad at early dawn to fetch fresh water for the ḥaram from a favourite spring half an hour distant, had there met one of her own clan ; the description she gave of him identified Moḥarib. He had made many and minute inquiries of her regarding her mistress, and about the affairs of the family in general during

the last year. He had then, continued the girl, talked of other things ; but on parting had said, ‘Meet me here again; and meanwhile say to the Shekyh’s daughter, “be happy in him who arrives.”’

“‘I understood without explanation who was meant,’ continued Zahra’, ‘and that was enough. From that hour I lived again.’

“‘But the maid,’ interposed I, not without anxiety.

“‘No fear about her,’ she replied ; ‘when she brought the message, she neither knew who was meant by it, nor much cared to know ; her whole mind,’ with a light laugh, ‘was taken up with her cousin whom she had just met.

“‘How often she and Moḥarib saw each other afterwards, I cannot tell ; but it was through this maid that I was informed of your having actually arrived here the day before yesterday; and as I guessed whereabouts you would

first think of looking for me,—the heart often sees further than the eye, you know,—I commissioned her to wait under the garden-wall, and, if you were near, to make the signal which I was sure you would recognise. By this, she must, I fancy, have a tolerably clear idea. But she is attached to me; and her cousin has, no doubt, enjoined her secrecy; and she will be faithful to a secret of the clan. The threat of death itself would not make a girl of Benoo-Riah betray.'

" 'And, sister, the doorkeeper?' said I, 'the old black? can he be trusted?'

" 'Oh! Jowhar,' laughed she, 'our host; he in whose room we now are. He is a Nubian, and faithful as Nubians always are; besides he has, after a fashion, had charge of me from a child; and my intercession has saved him. I do not know how often from many a beating which his awkwardness would otherwise have

earned him. The old man is devoted to me. Of course when I saw that this den of his was the only safe and manageable place for us, I could not avoid, while giving him his orders, to confide to him your name and all about you. But that need not dwell on your mind; be easy on his score. However, do not forget to be kind and liberal to him; he deserves it; and he may be very useful to you yet.

“ ‘As to the little negro,’ she added, ‘who brought you the message, he is, I suppose, a slave-child belonging to some one of Moharib’s own tribe, the Benoo-Riah; he will tell no tales.’

“ ‘But while my servant girl was hidden behind the garden wall, she overheard old Rustoom Beg say something about building a parapet to the kiosk. I was puzzled, and thought it best to send at once for your brother

Moharib,—a handsome youth he is too,—however, you need not be jealous,—and try to arrange a different plan for meeting.’

“Fain would I have asked her, while she related all these things, some question relative to her own thoughts and feelings; but from this topic she had warned me already, nor did she ever approach it of her own accord. She seemed in her conversation wholly to have forgotten what concerned her, and to think only of me. What then needed I to seek? Had she in the longest and most eloquent discourse laid bare to me her whole soul, that had borne less witness to her entire absolute love, than did this self-forgetful silence on everything else. I knew her mine,—mine only.

“How happy I was,—and, oh God, how wretched now!—in the look of her eye, in the presence of her smile, in the pressure of her

hand, in the sound of her voice, in the hour of which every moment assured me of what alone I valued upon earth, her love, I could not see beyond my own intense happiness.

“Yet between our talk I said some words expressive of my uneasiness lest any suspicion regarding us and our former interviews, any notion regarding the uses made of the kiosk and the garden, might have entered Rustoom Beg’s mind; or, if not his, that of some of his attendants.

“‘How should it?’ answered she quickly; ‘by what means? That is most unlikely, impossible indeed: besides I am certain that nothing of the kind has got abroad, or I should myself have heard about it long ago. Depend on it, my brother, the Beg’s afternoon visit to the kiosk was a mere chance, and his remark on the position of the kiosk followed as a matter of course.’

“Her quiet courage gave me heart. I gladly put aside my fears,—alas! too well founded though they were,—and agreed in her view of the incident. Had I told her all—? yet what would it have profited? So, changing discourse, I asked her whither led the door through which she had entered.

“‘On a passage,’ was her answer; ‘and thence along some half-empty store-rooms, to a staircase; by which one has access to the haram. It is seldom used however; the maids rarely pass this way; and should any person happen to be coming, Jawhar, who is now waiting esconced on the other side of the door, would give me timely notice.’

“We continued our conversation, now serious with the past, now gay and bright with the present, now hopeful with the future, till noon had long declined, and the ‘Aṣr, now as unwelcome as once it had been longed

for, drew on. She rose to leave me ; I rose too, scarcely knowing where I was, or what I did. As at our first meeting, she gave me her hand. I held and kissed it ; then for an instant her head leant on my breast,—oh ! why do I remember all this !—then she drew her veil across her face, and turned to the door. ‘Zahra’ ! and when again ?’ was all I could say. ‘Ahmed, brother, love ! soon, if it please God ;—you shall know.’ With these words she drew her veil once more a little apart, and smiled : but her eyes were glistening with tears ; mine were wholly dim. She was gone.

“A minute after old Jawhar re-entered the room, uglier by contrast, I thought than ever, in spite of the friendly expression on his wrinkled face, which was as amiable as a eunuch could make it. Aware that those of his condition are apt to transfer to money the affection which men bestow on other

objects, and mindful of Zahra's hint, I had already a good-sized silver piece loose in the side-pocket of my jacket; this I put into the black hand, which closed on it eagerly enough. I should have liked to have talked a little with him, but he allowed me no time; over-prolongation of my stay might have been fully as dangerous to his neck as to mine. So with a 'God be your guard, my white brother,' he gently opened the outer door, and through it dismissed me.

"A deluge of sunshine poured on the road, and dazzled my eyes; my thoughts were even more dazzled, and my feet scarcely aware of the ground on which they trod. Mechanically I turned, and, without rightly knowing what I was about, took a few steps in the direction by which I had come. Had I, in this bewilderment of ideas, fallen in with any of my comrades or town acquaintance, it is more

than probable that I should have betrayed myself by gesture or word ; a fortunate interruption prevented the danger. A pebble, thrown by some one behind, struck me sharply on the shoulder. Looking round I became aware that the thrower was no other than Moḥarib himself, who had taken this means of attracting my attention ; he was standing at the further edge of the stony patch of ground opposite the ḥaram, close to the maize field, and now beckoned me to follow him. I did so. He went before me through the tall screen of maize till he reached the hollow of the water-course beyond, and descended into it ; in silence I did the same, and we were soon seated together on a dry bank of rounded pebbles ; the height of the bank above us, and its windings concealed us from observation.

“ Hardly giving time for the ordinary salu-

tations, I seized his hand, and kissed it : I would have kissed his feet had he allowed me. ‘I have heard all,’ I said; ‘she has told me. O, my brother, how can I ever requite you for what you have done?’

“‘Do not thank me,’ he answered, ‘I have done nothing. But, Ahmed Agha, you should not have gone to the garden; you should have waited for me. Why did you break your word?’

“In truth I had no available excuse to offer, so I entreated his pardon. He laughed.

“‘Love is madness,’ said he; ‘I know it, and will not be one of those who censure a lover. But, brother, for God’s sake, be careful, now more than ever, or everything will go wrong.’

“I renewed my former promise : I would do nothing, attempt nothing, except at his advice and under his guidance. We then

held long discussion, for each of us had much to say and to hear.

“To be brief: he told me that, under pretext of a change of pasturage, he had managed to bring some sheep belonging to the tribe up to this neighbourhood, where he had arrived almost immediately after myself; that the Sheykh's daughter had sent for him the evening before, and had explained to him the difficulties of her actual position, now aggravated by those arising from Rustoom Beg's orders regarding the kiosk. He had promised her, he added, to remain in or near Diar-Bekr till the Emeer Daghfel's arrival, of which he made sure to have intelligence at least a week in advance; then, said he, we can best see what has to be done.

“In return I explained to him more fully what I had seen or heard. ‘But, Moḥarib,’ I concluded, ‘tell me one thing in simple

truth,—what has led you, almost a stranger as you were, thus to interest yourself in my behalf?’

“‘Nothing,’ he replied, ‘but that you are a true lover; and such a one deserves help from every other true lover. I have no other motive; your success is all I want now.’

“‘Since it is so,’ I rejoined, ‘you have by what you have said avowed yourself a lover also. Tell me, then, who it is that you love; whom I love you know.’

“‘She whom I love is far away,’ said he with a sigh. ‘For months we have not seen each other, nor shall till this summer be ended. But I will give you my story some other day, Aḥmed. This is now your hour, and the hour of your good fortune; mine has not come yet. When it does I shall rely on you, as you at present on me.’

“Gladly I promised, and again we pledged

our faith to stand by each other in life and to the death : a pledge destined, alas ! to be kept better by him than by me."

" You are, indeed, a fortunate young fellow," here interrupted T̃añtawee, " or you are a magician, in spite of your innocent looks. To have won the heart of a girl of Sheyban, and the brotherhood of a lad of Benoo-Riaḥ, is something that few can boast. Turks, Koordes, Georgians, Albanians, and, so far as my experience of them goes, Europeans, are each well enough in their way ; but what race of man can compare with the Arab in generosity of friendship, in warmth of love, in constancy above all ? Nor do I say this because I am myself an Arab, and of the Arabs, but because, looking around me, I see that such is the truth, and truth is truth whoever says it."

" You are right," answered Hermann, " and

I, a stranger by birth, have found among them all that you say, and more. In these respects they stand alone; none can compare with them. In war, in counsel, in poetry, in eloquence, in enterprise, in courtesy of manners, in the beauty of life, as companions, as friends, as lovers, I have tried them in all, and found them wanting in none. My happiest days have been amongst them; and amongst them my happiest days will yet be, if God has any such in store for me,"

"And next after the Arabs?" asked Tāntawee; "I am curious to know your opinion; you ought to be an impartial judge."

"You will think it strange," said Hermann; but the race that I have found the most like the Arab in constancy of attachment, and the best sympathising, too, with Arabs in many other ways, is one very unlike in several respects, both of body and mind: I mean the negro.

Sometimes I fancy that the two must derive from a common origin ; and yet again, the difference is too great for that. How could they ever have been one ?”

“Certainly ;” laughed his friend, “if, like a good Muslim, you give credit to the pedigree drawn up by H̄ejaz chroniclers, and all their nonsense,—do not make a wry face, it is nonsense, and you know that it is as well as I do,—about K̄aḥtan,¹ Abraham, Isma’eel, and the rest, you can indeed find no place for the negro in your genealogical tables. Nor do I myself well perceive how the dissimilarity in type and colour can be satisfactorily accounted for, even by difference of climate, or lapse of time. Still, if not a brotherhood it is a cousinship ; though

¹ Supposed by Mahometan annalists to be the same as the Joktan of Genesis, son of Heber, and to be the ancestor of the southern Arabs, as Ishmael of the northern.

the common Adam of both must, I think, have been very far back on the list of the six thousand successive Adams and their descendants whom the Prophet,—God's blessing on him for it,—had the good sense to admit before the extremely recent Adam and Eve of ordinary story."

"Be it so," replied Hermann; "I can only say that I have had a wide experience of both races, and have found both true, each in its own way. Nor—when among Arabs at least—have I ever regretted the absence of other men and women; certainly I did not then."

"But now," continued Tanṭawee; "have you now no longings to return to your German village,—I have forgotten its name,—and to the life of those there? or has it lost its charm for you? Does no image of the place, or of its people haunt you still? or have you given

up every wish to be with them and of them again ?”

Hermann was silent a minute or two, as though collecting his thoughts. “No,” at last he answered, “I have no such wish or longing now. While I was among them, I loved them dearly, God knows ; but here in the East I have known truer love, freer breath, a manlier creed, and a wider scope ; nor have I the heart to squeeze myself painfully again into the more regular and better polished, but narrower grooves of European life and thought. Besides, what should I do there now ? I have learnt a different estimate of things ; their interests would no longer be mine. European ways and manners, occupations and talk, would jar on me every hour of the day ; and I should at last either wither under the self-imposed constraint, or break through into extravagances of word and deed injurious alike to myself and

to those around me. No, Tanṭawee, as an Eastern and a Muslim I have passed the brightest days, the pleasantest years, of my life ; as an Eastern and a Muslim I will drink what remains to me of the cup, though it be the dregs only."

Tanṭawee laughed again. "There spoke the boy! Not thirty years old yet, and talking about the dregs of life! Well, keep to your resolution, carry it out. Of all follies,—and men's lives are at the most nothing more,—it is perhaps the least foolish. Or rather," in a lower tone, "of all wisdoms,—and there is a deep wisdom in every man's life, if not in the man himself,—it is, I truly think, the wisest. Scarce one man in a thousand knows what is really his proper element, or what is not ; and if you are that one, as it seems by what you say, you are not only fortunate, but far-sighted.

"However, please remember that if human

existence, as you hint, is short, summer nights are not very long, either ; and, unless some strange crisis intervenes, your tale is not yet, for what I can conjecture, near its end ; though hear it out I must and will, and this night, too. To-morrow, God knows how we may be occupied, both you and I."

"It was you that interrupted me yourself," said Hermann, and resumed his narrative.

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